MAKING-FACE, MAKING-HEART: CONSTRUCTION

OF A HOLISTIC ECOLOGY OF INDIGENOUS

EDUCATION FOR MESTIZO AMERICANS

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Abstract

Making-Face, Making-Heart: Construction of a Holistic Ecology of

Indigenous Education for Mestizo Americans

By

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Data from an ethogenic investigation of the local community of Latinos/as reveals a

community whose world-view is different from that of the dominant American culture.

Semiotic analysis of the data supports the view that the community perceives the world and

responds to it from an indigenous perspective. This perspective is often at odds with the

framework of the dominant middle-class world. Upon entering the mainstream world, the

inevitable clash of values that occurs places the Latino/a learner in a precarious position.

With an incomplete identity and inadequate coping mechanisms, Latino/a learners are forced

into contact with a culture whose world-view is often at odds with their own. Research

indicates that this forced contact reinforces loss of personal and cultural identity.

It is suggested that the preferred goal of identity formation for young Latino/a learners

involves the construction of a multiple identity—the maintenance of one's primary cultural

identity concurrently with the ability to function in the dominant culture.

This project develops an indigenous ecology of education compatible with the

epistemological frameworks and cognitive learning styles of *mestizo/a* learners, specifically

Chicanos/as, living in Southern California. The goal of an indigenous ecology of education

is to educate for a holistic, multiple identity or many-identity and, where possible, to do so

utilizing the social constructs of the learner. The pedagogical practices and philosophy of the

Nahuatl speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica are evaluated as one model of holistic

education capable of informing this vision. 'Making-face, making-heart,' the *Nahuatl* metaphor for identity formation or construction of personality, means to "give wisdom to the face." It reflects pedagogy that is social in context and personal in scope. In the *Mexica* world, people-making involved formation of persons for placement in the life of the community. Practical application of the model demonstrates that a parallel system of education for Latino/a learners in the U.S. results in the development of a multiple identity and improves the ease with which Latinos/as move into and out of the dominant and subaltern cultures.

Thus they have to tell it,
thus they have come to record it in their narration,
and for us they have painted it in their codices,
the ancient men, the ancient women.
They were our grandfathers, our grandmothers,
our great-grandfathers, great grandmothers,
our great-great-grandfathers, our ancestors.
Their account was repeated,
they left it to us;
they bequeathed it forever
to us who live now,
to us who come down from them.

Never will it be lost, never will it be forgotten,
that which they came to do,
that which they came to record in their paintings:
their renown, their history, their memory.
Thus in the future
never will it perish, never will it be forgotten,
always we will treasure it,
we, their children, their grandchildren,
brothers, great-grandchildren,
great-great-grandchildren, descendants,
we who carry their blood and their color,
we will tell it, we will pass it on
to those who do not yet live, who are to be born,
the children of the Mexicans, the children of the Tenochans. . . .
– Alvarado Tezozómoc, *Crónica Mexicayotl*[*]

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[*] Miguel León-Portilla, ed., Pre-Columbian Literatures of México (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 117, quoted in Miguel León-Portilla and Earl Shorris, In the Language of Kings: An Anthology of Mesoamerican Literature—Pre-Columbian to the Present (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 311.

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Prologue

The final years of the twentieth century witnessed an explosion of Latino/a visibility in the mainstream American public. Publications encouraged this phenomenon with their proclamation of 1999 as the "Year of the Latino." In the sound media, Spanish was spoken with the proper accent, *salsa* music blared from radios, and a small dog repeated over and over: "*Yo quiero* Taco Bell." Suddenly it was regarded fashionable to be ethnic. As Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz poignantly expressed: "This society deals with [us] as they deal with a circus: they love our *mariachis, salsa, arroz con pollo, bacaladitos, margaritas*—we can really entertain them."[*] And entertain them we did: music, movies and television personalities suddenly reflected an ethnic flavor. Jennifer Lopez, Ricky Martin, Jon Secada, Enrique Iglesias, Antonio Banderas and Jimmy Smits became the newest popular idols. Their careers paralleled the escalating desire to reach out to and exploit the "Hispanic" population.

Unfortunately this change in the color and language of the country was not due to a new appreciation for all things Latino/a. The sudden rise in ethnic consciousness was driven principally by corporations eager to profit from the large source of untapped revenue located in the Latino/a community. Tapping these resources would not be not simple; direct communication with the community was the essential first step. Consequently, connecting with the community would occur only when commercials and billboards reflected the

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[*] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Toward an Understanding of *Feminismo Hispano* in the U.S.A.," Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), eds. Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Mary D. Pellauer, 55, quoted in Robert S. Goizueta, "Rediscovering Praxis: The Significance of U.S. Hispanic Experience for Theological Method," in We Are a People!: Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology, ed. Robert S. Goizueta, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 73.

language, culture and look of the Latino/a community. To achieve these ends, entertainment personalities were recruited, commercials, videos and music were made more ethnic, young people were hooked and corporations were once again successful in their exploitation of the community. Acceptance of "Latino/a Culture" by the dominant culture, always conspicuously superficial, has not followed. Rather than a Latinization and appreciation of Latinos/as by the broader popular American culture, we are left with the Americanization of the Latino/a community—an Americanization that reeks of consumerism and encourages assimilation. In the end, those who capitalized were the corporations and their leaders; the community of Latinos/as, as usual, remained the loser.

I am amazed by the number of people who point to the recent Latino/a resurgence as proof that race relations have improved and that we are witnessing the emergence of a "new ethnicity." In this project I reject the myth that all is well; instead, I work from the premise that the reality of daily life for Latinos/as has not changed—racism, oppression, lack of education and the struggle to survive will continue to impact the Latino/a community in the twenty-first century. If the professed newfound acceptance of the Latino/a lifestyle were real, it would be reflected by the statistics. Numerous recent studies reveal, however, that there has been no significant improvement in education, gross income, health care services or crime rates in areas of the United States with large Latino/a populations. Furthermore, dropout rates from high school and percentages of students entering and graduating from college have not changed in the last fifty years. Inasmuch as the state of education for the Latino/a in the United States remains unchanged, prospects for improvement in the future are dismal.

Despite the perception that Latinos/as are acknowledged to be the wave of the future, I suggest that it is a wave that is unwanted. In order to acquire the numerous resources the community requires, the struggle must continue. *¡Sí se puede!*

Introduction

While conducting the research for this project, I spent endless months exploring that part of the United States and México where my grandmothers—Maria Bracamonte Moreno and Veronica Martinez Leiba—and great-grandparents—Dolores Leiba Rico and Francisco Martinez Pabon, and Catarina Licon Ramirez and Antonio Chacon—were born and raised. This included the land extending along the U.S.-Mexican border from Nogales, Arizona to the *Mesilla* Valley of New Mexico and Texas. These excursions provided me the opportunity to meet distant relatives and learn stories about the lives of my ancestors. As I listened to their narratives and challenged myself to understand their worlds in terms of the present, I re-experienced their joy, pain, sadness, loss, embarrassment, ambiguity, and frustration—similar feelings I had felt as a child educated in a European dominated middle-class world. The psychic dissonance and inner conflict this produced generated new questions about the direction my life and pedagogy would take.

Grounded deeply in the *ideology* of a philosophy of liberation, I knew that the task of an educator in the so-called "Hispanic" community was one that existed because of the vital need for a coherent formulation and disclosure of *our own mestizo/a* experience based upon our unique *mestizo/a* condition. I also recognized that, for each Chicano/a, for each *mestizo/a* American, our ethnic and cultural conditioning as *mestizos/as* is not a choice over which we have control, but "what we do with our *[mestizaje]* is a choice we make again and again."[1]

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[1] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Yolanda Tarango, <u>Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church</u> (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), xii. The authors use the umbrella term "Hispanic." A *mestizo/a* is an offspring of European Spanish and indigenous North or South American parents. *Mestizaje* refers to the generation of a new people through miscegenation from two unequal and disparate parent peoples.

Nevertheless the reality I confronted in the stories I heard and the lives I encountered forced

me to come to grips with a truth I had not previously accepted: Years of comfortable middle-

class living had created in me a condition that resulted in an abandonment of significant

cultural roots and turned me away from meaningful participation in the true struggle of the

community. Accustomed to living on the border between the Euro-centric world of academia

and the middle-class "Hispanic" world fashioned by my family, I was suddenly faced with the

reality that neither offered me a complete understanding of what it means to be a *mestizo/a* in

today's world. Wherever I chose to stand, I was both an "insider and an "outsider"and in

need of "mental decolonization."[2] From that point I was no longer able to accept the

centrality of the western world of theology and education. It, like the myth of "Hispanic"

assimilation instilled in me by my parents, was an illusion incapable of giving life or meaning

to my world. I could only cry out with the voices of the spirits of God, *¡Ya, basta!*[3]

The time had arrived for me to reconnect with my community and to participate in the

"forward march of the people."[4] The dominant system—the same system which insists on

naming us and dictating the manner in which we act, think, talk, and write—would silence

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[2] Mental colonization is the term Frederique Apfeel Marglin uses to describe the auto-critique
necessary for those whose acquired knowledge is grounded in the modern western world. Anchored in
indigenous cultures, she concludes that, "no cultural affirmation can take place without simultaneously
engaging in a process of mental decolonization." Cited in Madhu Suri Prakash and Gustavo Esteva,
Escaping Education: Living as Learning within Grassroots Cultures (New York: Peter Lang Publishing,
1998), 75.

[3] The phrase "spirits of God" is derived from an indigenous world-view where the *cosmic
community* is sustained in existence through the one Spirit manifesting itself through spirit-filled souls and
contexts *in relationship with* and *united to* the common group.

[4] The phrase originated with Frei Betto in Brazil. Cited in Juan Luis Segundo, The Liberation of
Theology (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1976), 239.

me no more. Consequently, in order to remain true to myself, my family history and my community, the only theology and pedagogy imaginable for me is a theology and pedagogy based first on my experience of *mestizaje* but also on the broader experience of those closest to me: my immediate and extended family—past, present and future—in all of its cultural and ethnic resplendence. Mom and dad, sisters and brothers, *bisabuelos*, *abuelos*, *tios* and *tias*, cousins, *comadres* and *compadres*—all those who contributed to an environment that nurtured a place called home—stand nearby breathing encouragement and admonition. These are the people who represent the voices silenced by the fear and shame of oppression, eager finally to express themselves in a new way. It is with their collective voices that I now speak.

That voice, the voice of the *mestizo/a*, like the voices of all so-called "minorities" living in the United States, has been under-represented and virtually mute for far too long regarding the social, economic, political, educational and spiritual decisions that shape our destiny. Covertly or overtly, every segment of society—public and private, religious and secular—has contributed to the current state of affairs. It is time to proclaim powerfully what we who work at the grassroots level observe daily: the issues confronting our communities are specific to our communities; they are not issues of the mainstream or alternative academia; or of liberals, progressives or conservatives; or of post-modernists or modernists, and are certainly not problems derived from European world-views. Unfortunately, local resolution of the many issues confronting the North American Latino/a community and "the

reflection that rightly flows from it are characteristically absent."[5] It is time to break the pattern of problem-solving that historically entrusts resolution of community concerns to the so-called experts. The North American Latino/a community must be empowered to construct local responses and contextual solutions to solve community issues. Civic leaders, particularly educators and theologians, must assume a more activist role in the community—one linked to the historical reality of the entire Latino/a experience. It is from within this framework that the *mestizo/a* educator and theologian must operate. In order to do so the task and role of the educator and theologian working in and with the community must be redefined. Redefining those roles is an implicit goal of this project.

<div align="center">The Problem in its Historical Context</div>

As a people, *mestizos/as* have been objectified, humiliated, stripped of language, culture and religion, raped, conquered, subjugated, colonized and named. Still, we endure; by the year 2001, Mexican immigrants and others of Latino/a descent comprised greater than fifty percent of the population of Los Angeles County. By the year 2010, the non-Anglo school-age population in California is expected to be 60%, rising to 70% by the year 2030, with Latinos comprising 35% and 44% of these totals, respectively.[6] Even while growing in stature, the *mestizo/a* community, specifically the Mexican American community, continues to be the youngest, most economically deprived, under-educated and politically

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[5] Allan Figueroa Deck, "At the Crossroads: North American and Hispanic." In We Are A People!: Initiatives in Hispanic American Theology, ed. Roberto S. Goizueta (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 16.

[6] Rodolfo F. Acuña, Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles (London: Verso, 1996). See also Richard Valencia, "The Plight of Chicano Students: An Overview of Schooling Conditions and Outcomes," in Chicano School Failure and Success, ed. Richard Valencia (London: Falmer Press, 1991).

disenfranchised population in the United States. Educationally, the risk factors and indices of vulnerability for failure in the public school system are highest for Latinos/as.

These circumstances, regardless of the underlying causes, engender a growing apathy and disillusionment amongst the people who comprise the North American Latino/a community. This is problematic for the community itself as well as for the local, state and national political hierarchy. Because of the growing Latino/a population, the many local problems and their solutions will impact and inform future generations of Latinos/as. Seeking an answer to the so-called "Hispanic problem," government experts and community organizations impose a homogenous "Hispanic" identity on persons of Central, South American, Mexican American, and Caribbean descent. The reality is that North American Latinos/as are made up of many diverse groups, each with their own unique cultural identity and unique social and political issues. This is not a homogenous community in the traditional sense; rather, it is a community made up of many diverse communities and sub-cultures. For this reason, problems of poverty, underachievement in education and apathy must be confronted by the people living in the local communities from which the problems originate. The solutions will be effective only if they are remedied utilizing methods and tools generated from the people.

Goals and Approach

This project will consider the obstacles of educating faith, values and principles from the perspective of generations of *mestizo/a* immigrants living in Southern California, specifically immigrants from México. I suggest that restoration of an indigenous ecology of education is urgent for the future survival of the Chicano/a community. The task is to

develop an indigenous ecology of education more compatible with the epistemological

frameworks and cognitive learning styles of the immigrant and their children. **The central**

premise of this project is that education of the *mestizo/a* American learner is achieved

best by utilizing resources derived from within the local community. This grounded

pedagogy, one that respects the framework of the learner, is superior because it informs and

upholds the core identity of the *mestizo/a* learner and improves the ease with which she or he

moves into and out of the dominant and subaltern cultures. The goal of an indigenous

ecology of education is to educate for a holistic, multiple identity or many-identity and, where

possible, to do so utilizing the social and cognitive constructs of the learner. On a practical

level, utilizing the social constructs of the Latino/a learner shapes a reality whereby all

education is infused with religious meaning and can be construed as religious education. For

purposes of this project, religious education is defined as the process of sharing or gaining the

particulars of the community story and truth. This involves the formation of community

values, attitudes, and life-styles, as well as fostering the conversion of people, communities,

societies, and structures.[7]

The pedagogical practices and philosophy of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient

Mesoamerica, specifically the *Mexica*, will be evaluated as one model of holistic education

capable of informing this vision. Despite the fact that hundreds of indigenous societies

constituted the nation of México prior to the European conquest, the most extensive, if not

the dominant, philosophy was that of the *Nahuatl* speaking groups whose offspring extended

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[7] Robert W. Pazmiño, Latin American Journey: Insights for Christian Education in North America (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1994), 61.

from northern México to Central America. The *Mexica* were the last of the *Nahuatl* speaking

tribes to migrate from the north, enter and subsequently dominate central México and

portions of Central America; it was their philosophical categories and interpretation of the

cosmos which had the greatest influence on the philosophical constructs and laws of the post-

conquest world of México.[8] Therefore, it is their categories of thought and philosophy that I

will explore in identifying key elements of an indigenous pedagogy.

To achieve the overarching goal of constructing an indigenous ecology of education, I

will: (1) review the problems of education faced by Latino/a learners in the United States; (2)

highlight the characteristics of *Nahuatl* philosophy, before and after the conquest, that

informed their pedagogical methods; (3) identify and construct a theological anthropology

appropriate to both the indigenous and orthodox Christian philosophical traditions; and (4)

draw upon the aforementioned epistemology of the *Nahuatl* speaking people to construct a

model of indigenous education more compatible with the cultural characteristics found in the

modern day descendant of these ancient Mesoamericans.

Part I of this project reviews the many ways in which, historically, the system of

education in the United States has marginalized the *mestizo/a* American. An implicit

assumption is that education cannot be and never is neutral; religious or secular, it either

perpetuates the present social order or transforms it. As fundamental agents of acculturation,

public and private schools perpetuate racism: overtly, by an assimilationist mentality, or

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[8] For an interesting comparison between laws of the *Mexica* and present day Mexican laws, see Carlos H. Alba, Estudio Comparado entre el Derecho Azteca y el Derecho Positiva Mexicano (México City: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1949).

covertly, as agents of popular American culture.[9] Ironically, so systemically ingrained are these racist attitudes that the majority of Americans are oblivious to them and deny their very existence. This section will demonstrate that the world of academia confronted by *mestizo/a* learners communicates that certain cultural differences are substandard or inappropriate; different ways of thinking, communicating, and being are perceived as inferior.

Chapter 1 investigates, ethogenically, the modern day violent and unequal encounter of cultures experienced by the local Mexican American, Chicano community. Interviews, dialogues, and observations of the community provide the data for the investigation. A semiotic reading of culture permits the analysis and interpretation of the cultural data of the local Chicano/a community. Analysis of the data reveals a community whose world-view is different from that of the dominant American culture.

Chapter 2 examines the historical record and integrates it with the cultural data extrapolated from Chapter 1. What emerges are the epistemological roots of the local community of *mestizo/a* Americans—roots that suggest that this community socially constructs their world utilizing an indigenous framework.[10] By focusing on the oral roots of the culture, the sense of bi-location felt by many *mestizos/as*, the cultural tendency to rely upon folk religiosity and folk wisdom, and patterns of migration and immigration, Chapter 2 provides historical support for the conclusions made in Chapter 1. In its entirety, Chapters 1

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[9] See Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, Henry Gutiérrez, eds., Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[10] This is not unlike the reality in México, where Guillermo Bonfil Batalla claims that the presence of that which is indigenous "is found in almost every social and cultural aspect of the country." Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization, trans. Philip A. Dennis (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 41.

and 2 provide an analysis of the reality experienced by the many groups of Latinos/as who live in Southern California and further advocates the creation of alternative methods of education for Chicanos/as.

The bulk of Chapter 3 points out the many ways in which education is a struggle for *mestizo/a* Americans. This analysis focuses on the social and historical issues surrounding identity formation and the construction of a holistic identity in the face of an oppressive system of education. A case is made that education of the *mestizo/a* American learner is achieved best by utilizing resources derived from within the local community. It is demonstrated that a community-based, grassroots approach to education improves the ease with which persons move in and out of the dominant and subaltern cultures. Numerous resources are employed to support this argument. Esteva and Prakash provide a useful, albeit controversial, perspective with their assertion that the imposition of compulsory education for persons of color—the "social majorities"—is destroying cultures that have thrived for centuries without "benefit" of a state mandated education.[11] Their challenge to the universally accepted ideal of education as a basic need is grounded in their observation that indigenous cultures have successfully transmitted their ways of life and flourished for centuries without the benefit of the traditional western schooling model of education. Chapter 3 concludes that failure to successfully maneuver between two worlds severely undermines the self-image and social mobility of the young Latino/a learner.

Part II outlines the *Mexica* system and philosophy of education, describing and analyzing their pre- and post-conquest strategy for educating persons. Collectively, each

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[11] Prakash and Esteva, Escaping Education.

learner was formed with the intention of being placed into the life of the community. Here I will focus on the *Nahuatl* understanding of "making-face, making-heart," the *difrasismo* for formation or the social construction of personhood.[12] In the *Mexica* system, to educate meant to "give wisdom to the face"; it was a construct that was always social in context and personal in scope.[13] Outlining the philosophical and historical roots of their beliefs, Chapter 4 sets the stage for understanding the *Nahuatl* concepts of formation of personhood and identity.

The philosophical and epistemological framework for education in the *Nahuatl* speaking world was based on a conception of the cosmos as an organic unity. In this construct, humanity was placed in an ordered, yet slippery, relationship with the entire cosmos.[14] Successfully navigating this perilous relationship was considered essential to the maintenance of the universe; it demanded a moral code and system of ethical behavior consistent with the regulations of the community and the life force of the cosmos. By internalizing the moral code and practicing the ethical behaviors of the community, a person evolved into an educated person—one who exercised rigorous discipline, who was well versed in the community narrative and who understood his or her relationship to the cosmos and to the community. In this way persons controlled their own destiny in the context of the

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[12] The language form used to impart the *Nahuatl* understanding of the inherent duality of the cosmos, a *difrasismo*, involves two conjoined words that create one idea or concept. The resulting meaning typically has no relation to the original two words. It is used by the *Nahuatl* speaking people as a means of metaphorically describing a person, place or concept.

[13] Miguel Leon-Portilla, Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 135.

[14] See Louise M. Burkhart, The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

community by making a complete face and an upright heart. Bernardino de Sahagún, Diego Duran and the many primary sources available supply the data utilized in this analysis.[15]

Subsequently the *Mexica* system was replaced by the educational system of the Franciscans and other Christian missionaries. Chapter 5 demonstrates that the underlying philosophical framework of the people did not change, however. It was and continues to be grounded in a theological anthropology that is centered on the idea of duality (*Ometeotl*), an

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[15] For a description of *Mexica* religious, cultural, and political practices and beliefs prior to the conquest see: Arthur Anderson and Charles Dibble, eds. and trans. General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex: [Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España], by Bernardino de Sahagún, 13 vols. (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research, 1958-1982); Frances F. Berden and Patricia Rieff Anawalt, eds. The Essential Codex Mendoza (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); John Bierhorst, trans Cantares Mexicanos: Songs of the Aztecs (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); Elizabeth H. Boone, Incarnations of the Aztec Supernatural: The Image of Huitzilopochtli in Mexico and Europe. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 79, pt. 2, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1989); Burr Cartwright Brundage, The Fifth Sun: Aztec Gods, Aztec World (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979); David Carrasco, Quetzalcoatl and the Irony of Empire: Myths and Prophecies in the Aztec Tradition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); and Religions of Mesoamerica: Cosmovision and Ceremonial Centers (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1990); Diego Durán, The History of the Indies of New Spain, trans Doris Heyden (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Miguel León-Portilla, Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind; and The Aztec Image of Self and Society: An Introduction to Nahua Culture (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992). For a description of *Nahua* religious, cultural, and political practices and beliefs after the conquest see Burkhart, The Slippery Earth; Enrique Florescano, Memory, Myth and Time in Mexico: From the Aztecs to Independence (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); James Lockhart, The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992); and J. Richard Andrews and Ross Hassig, eds. and trans, Treatise on the Heathen Superstitions: That Today Live among the Indians Native to this New Spain, 1629, by Hernando Ruiz de Alarcon (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984).

Arnoldo Vento contributes a controversial indigenous revision to the predominantly European analysis of *Nahuatl* culture provided by Sahagún and Duran. Arnoldo Carlos Vento, Mestizo: The History, Culture, and Politics of the Mexican and the Chicano—The Emerging Mestizo-Americans (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1998). Walden Browne provides a helpful reinterpretation of the modernist understanding of Sahagún as the first modern ethnographer. Instead, argues Browne, Sahagún—no more than a product of the medieval time in which he lived—failed to successfully define the *Mexica* world view within the categories understood by the medieval mind. Walden Browne, Sahagún and the Transition to Modernity (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

An analysis of otherness and an understanding of the categories of "the other" are essential to the cultural construction of identity. Tzvetan Todorov's analysis and taxonomy of alterity (axiological, praxeological, epistemic) offers an effective tool for judging ethnographic data and prioritizing questions of identity. See Todorov, The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other (New York: Harper & Row, 1984).

organic understanding of one's relationship to the community and cosmos (*tonal*), and constant movement (*ollin*). Essential to the development of this argument is the need to demonstrate that an undercurrent of Mesoamerican beliefs and practices persisted over the centuries and exists today. I will show that as the newly constituted hybrid Mesoamerican culture made the transition from one with an indigenous world view into one that was outwardly European, its rituals and practices did not disappear, rather, they were merely relegated to the periphery of civic life. These ritual beliefs and practices, however, carried within them the wisdom of the ancestors. At their core—concealed within a matrix that preserved the ancient understanding of the sacred and the profane—they embodied the philosophical constructs of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica. In private and out of sight of the priests and leaders, elements of the old culture were transmitted from one generation to the next. Transmission of this wisdom, and the identity it embraced, was conveyed predominately through the domains of popular wisdom, popular religion and popular healing rituals, spheres of life and thought that were inextricably linked and intimately inseparable. These spheres became the locus of a new, hidden resistance, impenetrable by the conqueror.

It will be demonstrated that these spheres of resistance, intricately interwoven with the religious beliefs and cognitive framework of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica, comprised a sturdy matrix around which elements of Mesoamerican culture was communicated. It was this matrix that served as the basis for the cultural resiliency of the people and culture. With a cultural identity constructed from within this subaltern context, Part II concludes that the world-view of today's *mestizo/a* is deeply embedded in the

consciousness of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica. While there may exist some elements of syncretism, it is more likely that the community of modern day *mestizos/as* utilizes a dual or multiple epistemology for negotiating the world.

Part III constructs a theological anthropology consistent with a model of the cosmos derived by the *Nahuatl* speaking peoples. Compatible with a dual system of negotiating the world, the theological analysis done in Chapter 6 also draws upon the works of Jürgen Moltmann, Leonardo Boff and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This offers a comparative reflection between the *Nahuatl* anthropology and the way in which these three Christian theologians construct ideas of community, God and social systems. This analysis is particularly important because of the post-conquest influences of Christianity on the *Mexica* people—an influence that continues to exert itself today. Collectively, each of the three theologians suggest that the social doctrine of the Godhead is the fundamental model for all relationships and social systems. This Trinitarian model is ultimately compatible with the *Mexica* view of humanity, although concretely the *Mexica* were never able to understand the reason for a third person of the Godhead. Furthermore, it allows the construction of a panentheistic vision of society where humanity is in fellowship with humanity, with God, and with all creation. Integrating the social doctrine of the trinity with the *Nahuatl* construction of the cosmos, I then reconstruct a theological anthropology of sociality.

Part IV reconstructs a holistic ecology of indigenous education grounded in the model of sociality derived from *Nahuatl* philosophy integrated, primarily, with Boff's theological anthropology. Using as a case study a community college located in a service area where the surrounding population is 64% Latino/a, I will describe a process of education constructed

and implemented specifically for and with the recent immigrant population. I suggest that this model provides the *mestizo/a* and Chicano/a learner in the United States with a system of education that parallels *Mexica* pedagogy; ultimately, this will empower the Latino/a learner and allow the development of a complementary multiple identity.

Definitions

Before beginning the constructive process, it is imperative that a common meaning for certain words and phrases be established. This section will define the ways in which the terms "*mestizo/a*," "Chicano/a," "Latino/a," "Hispanic," "culture," "assimilation," and "enculturation," are understood throughout the project. The purpose is to explore more appropriate terms.

"Hispanic"

> Others had been telling us who we were. Nobody had bothered to ask us, 'Who are you?' Until now, all kinds of experts had studied us, but no one had even sought to enter into conversation with us so that they might truly understand who we see ourselves to be. This was the very root of our oppression. We were not allowed to be who we were. We were never allowed to simply say: 'I am.'[16]

Oppression takes many forms and is of many types. In the United States there exists a climate of contempt toward so-called "minority" groups struggling with the necessarily long and public process of self-identification. Rather than understand this process as an historical inevitability, it is derided by critics as separatist or un-American. Even those who claim to be sensitive to issues of race and ethnicity misunderstand the importance of self-identification. To ease the methods by which groups of people are categorized, members of different ethnic

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[16] Virgilio P. Elizondo, "*Mestizaje* as a Locus of Theological Reflection," in Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States, ed. Allan Figueroa Deck (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 106.

groups are labeled according to bureaucratic or government imposed classifications. The labels are generally non-threatening, universal or umbrella terms applicable to all so-called "minorities" who happen to have certain traits or geographical origins in common. Thus, all persons of Chinese, Japanese and Korean identity are labeled "Asian" and all people indigenous to the North American continent are labeled "Native-American." Likewise, regardless of their national origin, all those who speak Spanish are labeled "Hispanic," "Latino," or "Latina" which are used interchangeably by many sources. Lost amongst the rhetoric is the social and historical significance of the struggle itself. It is imperative that those who are named work together to arrive at a term appealing to and accepted by the community itself.

This fundamental task of self-naming is essential to the process of self-identity. For the *mestizo/a* American, the task of naming ourselves, claiming a public and private space and reformulating an identity, is a priority—it is the foundation on which further sociological, pedagogical and theological work rests. An implicit purpose of this project is to lift up the ways in which persons from so-called "Hispanic" backgrounds identify themselves. First, however, a number of names and phrases require interpretation.

A *mestizo/a* is an offspring of European Spanish and indigenous North or South American parents. The vast majority of North and South American Latinos/as are *mestizo/a* and are conditioned culturally—although not culturally determined—by this reality. ***Mestizaje* refers to the generation of a new people through miscegenation from two unequal and disparate parent peoples, in this case, the formation of the *mestizo/a* from European Spanish and indigenous parents.** For purposes of this project, *mestizaje* also

includes the process of a religious synthesis or syncretism.[17] Virgilio Elizondo uses the term

mestizaje to describe a process whereby two totally different peoples mix biologically *and*

culturally so that a new people begins to emerge, e.g., Europeans and Asians gave birth to

Euroasians; Iberians and Indians gave birth to the Mexican and Latin American people.[18] In

México, national identity is constructed along the lines of *mestizaje*; modern México is the

creative blending of indigenous, African and European predecessors. The national

ideological construct of *mestizaje* was formulated by the federal government of México after

the revolution of 1910. It became the established doctrine of the state and is today expressed

in official rhetoric, mythology and public ceremony.

"Hispanic" is the term introduced to the United States during Richard Nixon's

administration in 1968; the first "Hispanic Celebration Week" was celebrated in September

1969. Until the 2000 census, "Hispanic" was the term used by the United States Census

Bureau to designate any person with a Spanish surname or Latin American origin. It is the

umbrella term used to refer to the community of people living in the United States whose

origins are Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, Central and South America, and México.

Although "Hispanic" is used extensively—particularly on the east coast of the United

States—and is accepted by many Latin American theologians and scholars, the terms

"Hispanic" and "Hispanic American" are problematic. A growing segment of the so-called

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[17] See Chung Hyun Kyung, Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1990), 113.

[18] Virgilio P. Elizondo, Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983); and The Future is Mestizo: Life Where Cultures Meet (Bloomington, Ind.: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988). As this new humanity emerges, "differences are not being destroyed, but they are being transcended and celebrated as together we usher in the beginning of the new humanity . . . . that all might truly be a united family of the planet earth." Elizondo, Galilean Journey, 10, 16

"Hispanic" population reacts strongly against the term "Hispanic" and considers it further evidence of the subjugation and subsequent racist and violent colonialism imposed by western society. Recent evidence shows that there is no single, preferred label for self-identification, whether national origin or an umbrella term.

What is clear is that the "Hispanic" label is uniformly disliked. Despite the presumption by the dominant society, very few so-called "Hispanic" persons living in the western United States name themselves "Hispanic" except when completing official documents or describing themselves to a "non-Hispanic." Susan Oboler, after an extensive study on the history and use of the umbrella term "Hispanic," concludes that the "new generation of Latinos cannot root their identity in a nation that lumps them indiscriminately together under the stigmatizing label 'Hispanic'" and treats them as second-class "foreign Others."[19] While the acceptance, meaning and significance of the descriptive terms "Hispanic" or "Hispanic America" varies according to national origin, current geographical location, generation, length of time spent in the United States and socioeconomic status, a poll of so-called "Hispanics" conducted in 1997, revealed that 84 percent of those polled preferred a national origin label over an umbrella term.[20] The poll dealt specifically with middle-class Latino's of all national origins living in the United States. Interestingly, the label "Hispanic" was preferred more by east coast respondents than respondents from the

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[19] Suzanne Oboler, Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 159.

[20] Daniel L. Roy, "Strangers in a Native Land: A Labyrinthine Map of Latino Identity," unpublished manuscript, University of Kansas, 1997.

southwestern United States. Of the umbrella terms, "Latino" ranked higher than any other.[21]

Of those respondents of Mexican descent living along the U.S.-Mexican border between

California and Texas, "Chicano" was the preferred name.[22]

The term "Chicano" has been used to describe the "resurrected" or mentally

decolonized Mexican American who, now politically aware, has cast off the neo-colonial

mind-set which evolved after years of living under oppression.[23] It is sometimes used as a

political term to describe all persons of Latin American descent living in the United States,

although this is rarely done.[24] Perhaps Rubén Salazar stated it best when he defined a

Chicano/a as "a Mexican American with a non Anglo image" of him or herself.[25]

Ana Castillo recently introduced the term "MexicAmerindian" as descriptive of the

population of people of indigenous Mexican origin who affirm their heritage as *mestizos/as*.

This name acknowledges the important role of the *Mexica* nation in the formation of the

Mexican identity.[26] I find her arguments compelling and will use "MexicAmerindian" when

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[21] However, there has recently been a backlash against the umbrella label "Latino/a." See Evelyn Aleman, "The Term 'Latino' Describes No One," Los Angeles Times, 10 April 1999, B7. Aleman ends her essay by affirming the importance of acknowledging "the diversity of all cultures living in American society and [moving] away from umbrella terms like 'Latino.'"

[22] In reality, labels change depending on the geographical and socio-political context. Latinos/as of Mexican descent may use "Mexicano," "Chicano," or "Pocho" among their social group but change the way they self-identify in their work or other environment to "Mexican American," "Latino," or "Latin American."

[23] See Armando B. Rendon, Chicano Manifesto (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 13f.

[24] Acuña, Anything But Mexican, 9; and Vento, 274-76.

[25] Rubén Salazar, quoted in David J. Weber, ed., Foreigners in their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), 9.

[26] Ana Castillo, Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994). The *Mexica* were the last of the *Nahuatl* speaking groups to migrate from the

referring to modern day descendants of the *Mexica* people. However, anthropologists recognize 289 indigenous languages currently spoken in México.[27] This indicates that a number of modern day Mexicans and their descendants are descendants not of the *Mexica* but of the numerous other indigenous people of México. To categorize each of them using the umbrella term *Mexica* is to contribute to the mentality of domination that a *mestizo/a* philosophy rejects.

With the above in mind I conclude that identification with a specific country of origin is the preferred manner of self-identification for the majority of persons from Latin America. Aside from the few who prefer the term "Hispanic" as a means of self-identification, self-identification using the generic term "Hispanic" is usually for the benefit of the "outsider" and takes place in the public arena. In this arena, the label "Hispanic" represents a symbol of inclusion as well as exclusion from mainstream society, a means of formulating a boundary. What significance this has in terms of self-identity is not clear. What is clear is the reality that self-identification with a name of one's own choosing is understood as a means of inclusion. Perhaps using a name imposed by the dominant culture permits a degree of acceptability or assimilation into that culture, and is sometimes chosen for that purpose; this choice is often accompanied by great personal loss.[28]

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north and enter central México. They are often inaccurately referred to as *Aztecs*.

[27] Barbara F. Grimes, ed. Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 13th ed. (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1996). The most authoritative reference available on the relationship of languages in the Americas is Lyle Campbell's American Indian Languages: The Historical Linguistics of Native America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[28] A phrase of self-description used by certain second and third generation Mexican Americans is, "I am an American (of Mexican heritage, or descent)." As a rule the second half of the phrase—of Mexican heritage—is added only with prompting. The phrase is used as a means of inclusion: "I am a true

For purposes of this project, in addition to using "Mexic Amerindian" to refer to modern day descendants of the *Mexica* or *Nahuatl* speaking people, I will use the terms "Chicano/Chicana" and "Mexican American" when referring specifically to the community of persons of Mexican descent living in the Southwestern United States—any person whose ancestors are from México. When referring to the larger community made up of all so-called "Hispanic" persons in the Northern hemisphere, I will use the descriptive phrase "*mestizo/a*" interchangeably with "Latino/a" or "North American Latino/a."

Culture

Every clearly demarcated cultural group transmits its own unique heritage in ways that reveal a combination of diverse elements. First, and most immediately observed, are the material elements of a society. Physical spaces, property, and natural resources provide boundaries around which the daily life of the community revolves. Acquired from the surrounding environment, these material elements provide a people its space in the world. Second, once in possession of an appropriated space, each group requires a strategy for organizing conduct. Social organization provides members of a society with regulations and standards of behavior. Finally, ways of organizing a community provide persons multiple codes for interpreting the world. In these codes are carried the inherited wisdom and knowledge of the group.

For purposes of this project, reference to culture, specifically to Mexican American or Chicano/a culture, pertains to the inherited knowledge of the group. **These are the patterns**

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member of the society which includes all citizens of the United States." Perhaps it also denotes a misunderstanding of the reality of historical exclusion experienced by persons of color.

of thought, feeling, symbol, habit, behavior and resistance—patterns of relationships and social structures—learned from a particular human group, which names, organizes, affirms, maintains and reproduces itself. This definition implies that culture is a dynamic phenomenon cultivated in persons living in a community context of shared meaning. Essential to this definition is an awareness that maintaining and sustaining a subaltern culture from one generation to the next is often accomplished in the face of opposition.

Clifford Geertz, whose perspective of culture is most often cited, derives a concept of culture based upon a semiotic understanding of the world. Semiotics, conceived of as the science of signs—or more correctly the analysis of codes and sign-functions—studies signs, signification and signifying practices, as well as the relationships between signs, codes and the way they impart meaning in everyday life.[29] Umberto Eco claims that particularities within the social structure of a culture or society are ideally identified as signs and therefore fall within the sphere of semiotic investigation. Semioticians suggest that meaning is generated from differences in context rather than from similarities. It is where these differences collide that a border is formed, hence the existence of different meaning making systems and different cultures.

According to Geertz, human culture denotes, an historically transferred

> pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions

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[29] See Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 27. Interpretation of patterns of relationships and social structures within and among cultures—including boundaries—will be accomplished utilizing a semiotic analysis. Semiotics provides a vocabulary of terms and techniques for analysis of the codes and signs that constitute the reality of systemic relations. See also Robert J. Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985), 56-73.

expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.[30]

Only by recognizing and accurately interpreting the signs and symbols of a given culture is it possible to navigate successfully within that culture. Comparing humans with animals "suspended in webs of significance," Geertz correlates culture with those self-spun webs. Thick, messy, interconnected and endless, these webs provide a structure in which humans beings make meaning of their lives and ground their world. Analysis of cultures is always "an interpretive one in search of meaning"—the search for a "thick description"—and must therefore delve deeply through these multiple layers of webs in search of the underlying significance.[31] Understood in this way, culture is not simply a set of behavior patterns, but is a "set of control mechanisms—plans, recipes, instructions, rules—for the governing of behavior."[32] By observing behaviors and evaluating the dynamics of relationships amongst people from a given culture, we can subsequently look back into that culture and discover the rules for the governing of behavior. This allows an interpretation of the signs, symbols and icons that a culture deems significant.

Others who have contributed to an understanding of culture that inform this project include John Westerhoff, Raymond Williams and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. Westerhoff, shaped by his own educational interests, affirms Geertz' perspective but prefers to think of culture as "socially established structures of meaning or significance, their related symbolic actions or

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[30] Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 44.

[31] Ibid., 5.

[32] Ibid., 89.

patterns of behavior, and their resulting artifacts."[33] Williams describes culture as a

"*signifying system* through which . . . a social order is communicated, reproduced,

experienced, and explored."[34] Isasi-Diaz, grounded deeply in *mujerista* theology, affirms that

each culture has, in addition to these patterns and structures, a "vivifying element," a soul,

which shapes in a particular way that culture. The soul is responsible for the "fundamental

attitude" of a culture, its openness, and its ease of "birthing" or "creating new patterns of

understanding and behavior."[35] This element is the life-giving force that allows a culture to

adapt in the face of threats to its survival. Isasi-Diaz claims that, for the *mestizo/a*, the

religious dimension of culture is its soul.

Enculturation, Acculturation and Assimilation

Enculturation is a natural process that takes place in the every day life of a

people; it is a process whereby tradition and meaning is passed on from one generation

to another via shared stories and common lives. How people learn the patterns, structures

and soul of a specific culture—the symbols, meaning-making systems, traditions and

rituals—is crucial for the maintenance and proliferation of that particular culture.

Enculturation is similar to formation.

Acculturation is the process whereby persons learn to adapt to the dominant and

popular culture while either maintaining or leaving behind their own sub-culture. It is

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[33] John Westerhoff, III, "Fashioning Christians in Our Day," in Schooling Christians: "Holy Experiments" in American Education, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and John H. Westerhoff, III (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 268-69.

[34] Raymond Williams, The Sociology of Culture (New York: Schocken Books, 1981).

[35] See Isasi-Diaz and Tarango, Hispanic Women, 70f, 121. Note that the "fundamental attitude" of a culture, as described by Isasi-Diaz, is not a social construct but is a social "unveiling or discovery."

the process of learning the rules and codes of a new culture. According to Westerhoff, "it is possible to be enculturated in one culture and acculturated to functions in a second culture without losing the fundamentals of one's primary culture."[36]

The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy defines **assimilation as "the process by which a person or persons acquire the social and psychological characteristics of a group."**[37] It refers to the process of losing one's primary culture for the purpose of assuming another, usually dominant, culture. I am convinced that assimilation into the dominant North American culture is detrimental to the Latino/a community because it creates a generation of people who lose the *Latinidad* of their souls. John Westerhoff claims otherwise, arguing that assimilation is analogous to enculturation: "it is the process by which adults are inducted into a new culture through conversion."[38] Conversions, in many instances, can be construed as no more than the process of induction into a new culture in a syncretic and synthetic manner. However, whereas conversion is typically conceptualized as an acculturative process—people adopt the traditions of a new belief system in the context of, and integrated with, a primary culture—one can make the case that assimilation involves the destruction of a person's primary culture and personal identity. This is because, when viewed from a subaltern perspective, assimilation ultimately destroys the original context. In reality—particularly in Southern California where the general population is exposed to a multitude of traditions, lifestyles and languages—the learning and un-learning of culture is not static but is a cyclical

[36] Westerhoff, 269.

[37] Eric D. Hirsch, Jr., Joseph F. Kett, and James Trefil, The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, 2nd ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 412.

[38] Westerhoff, 269.

historical process. Hence, total or full assimilation into the mainstream American popular culture does not occur and is not practical.

The Role of Culture in Shaping Identity: A Means of Affirmation and Resistance

The subtleties conveyed by the above conceptions of culture provide clues regarding the many dynamics found in any given culture. While helpful, they express neither the role of culture in shaping identity, nor the reality lived and discerned by those on the non-dominant side of the violent and unequal clash of cultures. Bonfil Batalla, describes the root of the problem:

> A basic characteristic of every colonial society is that the invading group, with a different culture from the dominated, ideologically affirms its immanent superiority in all areas of life and denies and excludes the culture of those colonized.[39]

The *Nahuatl* speaking people, and all indigenous people conquered by the Europeans in the sixteenth century, experienced the violent exclusion of their culture as a destruction and loss of identity and way of life. The significance of losing cultural identity tends to be overlooked by those who seek to interpret the cultural characteristics of the modern day descendants of the *Nahuatl* speaking people. In the context of the violent and unequal clash of cultures suffered by the indigenous peoples in México after the conquest and also endured by the Chicano/a in the United States today, the struggle to affirm, maintain and transmit ones culture in a subaltern and oftentimes hostile environment, becomes a meaningful function of culture itself. It is in this atmosphere that patterns of resistance and affirmation become the core of culture. In these instances, the struggle to maintain solidarities,

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[39] Bonfil Batalla, xvi.

boundaries, space, and membership is a formative factor in maintaining a unique cultural identity.

In these subaltern spaces it is evident that culture plays an important role in the construction of human identity. Here, in these spaces, people are neither self-constructed, nor are they socialized in a neutral vacuum. Formation of identity involves multiple interactions with the world close by, the world into which persons are born and raised. Each person must deal with the circumstances of his or her historically conditioned identity as part of a community and as part of a family constituted by a past, a present and a future. The cultural consciousness of a people—the personal and corporate identity, the unique ways of understanding and interacting with the world, the thoughts, feelings, and learning styles—is culturally conditioned and culturally nurtured. In the process of identity formation, numerous social factors—positive and negative, public and private—interact with and influence the world in which people live. Unfortunately, in North American society, the social forces which dominate the private and public world have a greater impact than individual privilege or empowerment. These social forces shape the daily reality of adults and children and "function to structure the world in which [they] exist and how it defines [their] place within that world."[40] Each of these cultural forces contribute to the social reality experienced by children and condition them to respond in a unique way. Hence, to consider any person separate from his or her unique social circumstances is misleading and a perpetuation of injustice, particularly for persons born into an historically oppressed culture or ethnic group.

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[40] Antonia Darder, "Bicultural Identity and the Development of Voice: Twin Issues for Cultural and Linguistic Democracy," in Reclaiming Our Voices: Bilingual Education, Critical Pedagogy and Praxis, ed. Jean Frederickson (Ontario, Calif.: California Association for Bilingual Education, 1995), 36.

When oppression is linked to historical patterns of migration, as it is for Latino/a immigrants and their children in the Southwestern United States, then the role of culture in the construction of identity assumes even greater meaning. For the immigrant, the contrasts between the homeland and the new country create a tension that in many cases is not adequately resolved. In many instances, financial and logistic forces create situations whereby families are unable to immigrate together. It is not unusual in these circumstances for adult men and women to enter the United States alone to locate jobs and shelter. Later, if and when they are able, these adult workers send for their families. In the process, disparities in experience and expectations are introduced into the family. Naturally occurring differences, such as the generational difference between adults and children and the age or developmental stage attained by the child at the time of immigration, cause further alienation amongst families. In the traditional Latino/a family, parents encourage their children to maintain their cultural identity by complying with the customs and traditions of their country of origin. Children, on the other hand, who most likely immigrated at a younger age than their parents, are influenced to a greater extent by their frequent contact with the popular culture of the dominant world. The public life of the young child demands regular contact with popular American society. They step into and out of distinct social contexts on a daily basis; during the course of their lifetime they may journey back-and-forth between many worlds. This repeated travel between and within worlds is experienced as a continuous crossing of boundaries and borders, a reality that influences identity and can either contribute to the desire to hold on to ethnic and cultural distinctions or the desire to conform and assimilate to the dominant society. Either way, these factors contribute to a climate of

distrust and confusion between the immigrant and the new society or amongst the immigrants and their families.

In summary, numerous elements shape the "immigrant reality." Each element contributes to a unique role for the immigrant in United States society and contributes to the construction of a distinct cultural climate within which the immigrant and their offspring survive on a daily basis. Survival within a particular climate provides the framework for shaping a unique cultural identity as well as providing a starting point for establishing relationships with persons from the dominant culture. It is also the existence of a particular cultural climate that allows the immigrant to affirm their traditional culture as a means of transmitting identity and simultaneously as a means of resisting the dominant culture.

Construction of a *Mestizo/a* Theology: An Historical Necessity?

The existence of a unique *mestizo/a* cultural reality affirms the necessity of a unique *mestizo/a* contextual reading of history, a reading equivalent to any other reading of history. Therefore, in order for the Latino/a community to achieve lasting economic, educational and social parity in the United States, the community must be accepted by the dominant society as a community of equals in possession of a unique story. Although marginalized by virtue of its lack of participation in the social structures that control its destiny, neither the *mestizo/a* community nor the *realidad* of *mestizaje* are marginal entities without history. Ontologically, that can never be the case, because, by definition, "a genuine polycentrism rejects the existence of *a* center, the very center presupposed by the notion of marginalization."[41] Only

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[41] Roberto S. Goizueta, "U.S. Hispanic Theology and the Challenge of Pluralism," in Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States, ed. Allan Figueroa Deck (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992), 14.

those who remain ignorant of their own historically conditioned perspective uphold the concept of an "orthodox" American ideology.

Realistically, achieving social and economic parity is the responsibility of the local community and requires the active participation of the people. In order for others to recognize the reality the Latino/a community experiences on a day-to-day basis, the community is responsible for naming its oppression and seeking local solutions to local issues. Such action requires awareness of a vision—a vision that reshapes the future—arising from within the community. As is any vision, it is constructed and articulated best from within the community itself. Wisdom communicated from the elders to the young in collaboration with knowledge obtained by the young and taught to the local community, can be fused to construct a vision of hope for the future.[42]

The entire process requires that the community first undergo an honest and critical analysis of community issues and behavior in the context of the violent and unequal clash of cultures. The importance of recognizing the importance of past behaviors for the cultural consciousness of a people is emphasized by Thomas Groome:

> [C]ritical looking back is done as a means toward looking forward. In this sense there is a future interest in the reflection in that the looking back makes way for future action. It is a deliberative and critical asking of—in the light of how and why I am acting—how will I act in the future? Thus the looking back at the genesis and interest is not a contemplative stance toward the past. It is not done out of curiosity. It is a critical looking at the past so that future action may be

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[42] Unfortunately, notions of economic and social equality and hope for civic development are meaningless when a community's best and brightest are attracted to the luster of dominant society. It is imperative that leaders in the Chicano/a community reject the myth that only those who leave can achieve "upward mobility" and obtain the "American dream." They must convince both themselves and the community that the issues and the people at the local level transcend personal gain or glory. To adequately articulate a Chicano/a or Latino/a paradigm of reality, the educator and the educated must be members of and be in touch with the local community—the people.

freely chosen and be given direction, rather than allowing the future to be shaped by the ideologies, norms, traditions, etc. of the society that mediates us.[43]

Thus, a socio-historic critique of culture does not advocate an historically *determined* concept of culture, rather it describes the historically *conditioned* elements of a culture in the hope of discerning and avoiding the conditions that led to the current situation. It must also lay the groundwork for reshaping the future. It is imperative that the North American Latino/a community continue to reformulate its reality and identity in the hope of reshaping the future. When this takes place, a true reawakening of the *mestizo/a* people will follow.

The Theological Task

María Pilar Aquino, in the first edition of the Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology, identifies eight tasks of a *mestizo/a* theologian engaged in the forward march of the people. The tasks are (1) to do theology on behalf of life and liberation (affirming life and liberation as foundational principles); (2) to do theology on the side of the poor and oppressed; (3) to do a contextual reading of history; (4) to aim toward reforming identity as a cultural and religious *mestizaje*; (5) to keep in mind the social location of hermeneutics, theology, and scripture; (6) to maintain a spirituality of hope in the struggle; (7) to understand the relationship between theology and pastoral action; and (8) to retain an ecumenicism grounded in the experience of base communities.[44] Of the eight tasks mentioned, this project focuses on the formulation of a dual or multiple identity in the context of a liberating system of education, religious and secular, in the Southwestern United States.

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[43] Thomas Groome, "Shared Christian Praxis," Lumen Vitae 31 (1976):199.

[44] María Pilar Aquino, "Directions and Foundations of Hispanic/Latino Theology: Toward a *Mestiza* Theology of Liberation," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 1 (Nov. 1993): 6.

According to Aquino, until recently, there was no theology capable of expressing,

> the motivations, the values, the meaning of Latino existence and the imperatives
> that guided our actions for change in the framework of a socio-cultural world
> different from the androcentric, Euro-American one.[45]

In recent years, however, there has been a marked increase in the creative discourse within the North American Latino/a community.[46] As a result, Aquino and others believe that the Latino/a theologian is the person capable of best articulating the *mestizo/a* reality—"the motivations, the values, the meaning of Latino existence"—and liberating the community of Latinos/as in the United States.[47] In their estimation it is the theological language of *mestizaje* that will encourage the struggle against evils and rehabilitate the hope of those before us who are fashioned as non-persons, those whose dreams and aspirations theologians claim to represent.

What caused this fundamental shift that led to the formulation and articulation of a *mestizo/a* theology is not known. What is known is that all over the Americas, religious leaders and professional theologians are taking the lead in confronting issues of racism, sexism and oppression. Many attribute the resurgence to a reassessment of the role of the theologian and religious leader. Sixto J. García argues that persons who would dare act as experts, or think of themselves as receptacles of religious or spiritual knowledge, must first

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[45] Aquino, 17-21.

[46] Eduardo Fernández names eight theologians who have contributed to the creative discourse and are influential in the contextualization of "Hispanic" theology. They are: Virgilio Elizondo, Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Orlando Espín, Allan Figueroa Deck, Jaime Vidal, Roberto Goizueta, María Pilar Aquino, and Justo González. See Eduardo C. Fernández, La Cosecha: Harvesting Contemporary United States Hispanic Theology, 1972 - 1998, (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2000).

[47] Aquino, 6.

embrace the natural relationship between popular religiosity and the community that traditionally exists in the Latino/a community. Popular religiosity encourages the community to embrace the religious leader and theologian "as the Thinker, Actor, Poet, and Prophet of the community."[48] The thinker, grounded deeply in the soul of the community, provides an interpretive language for the faith experience of the community; the actor participates in the daily drama of the people; the prophet engages the principalities and powers while pointing the way into tomorrow; finally, the poet interprets myth, and, brings to the surface,

> the deeper meanings of the faith community's own symbols, metaphors, and images of hope, sorrow, response to oppression, and awe and wonder before the sacredness of everything human of everything creational, of everything revelational.[49]

To do this successfully, those who claim to speak for the community must be grounded deeply in the community. Their theology must articulate the values and dreams of the Latino/a community; therefore, it must be distinctly situated in, and constructed from, the *realidad* of a common community. This requires operating from a position and perspective of belonging-ness; never presupposing that one is speaking for the community. Rather, one's words are always born in the community and belong to the community. Justo González describes such a theology as one that contains materials and insights "gleaned from a constant dialogue with" and among the entire community.[50] In this context, theological construction is

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[48] Sixto J. García, "Trinitarian Theology," in We Are a People, ed. Goizueta, 113f. See also "Sources and Loci of Hispanic Theology," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 1 (Nov. 1993): 38; and "Hispanic Theologians as Actors, Poets and Prophets of Their Communities," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 6 (May 1999): 5-18.

[49] Sixto J. García, "Trinitarian Theology," 113.

[50] Justo González, Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 30.

"a *teología de conjunto*; the theological subject is not the *ego* but the *communio*."[51] To the degree this task of creating meaning is true to the faith and experience of the *mestizo/a* community, it is not possible to speak of a private theology, it must be spoken of as a theology and a theological discourse of the believing and practicing community.

Theological discourse must be understood as a specific locus for theological reflection constructed as cultural theology. It is theological because it contends with the common values, symbols and religious understandings of a people. It is cultural because it is derived from and articulates the vision of a specific culture. To the extent that it maintains these values and participates in the religious and cultural expressions of the community—the forward march of the people—it remains a valid cultural theology. When it denies the values and religious and cultural understandings of the community, it places itself outside the community, loses its *corazon,* and ceases to be valid.

A Theology of *Mestizaje*

Virgilio Elizondo, arguably the elder amongst United States Latino/a theologians, proposed the concept of *mestizaje* as a way of interpreting the cultural reality of the *mestizo/a*. He initially constructed his model around the experience of the Mexican American/Chicano in the United States. He names and re-interprets three biblical principles: the Galilee Principle, the Jerusalem Principle and the Resurrection Principle.[52] What humanity rejects and looks down upon, God calls as Gods own, this is the Galilee Principle. God chooses an oppressed people to confront, transform and transcend the dominant

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[51] Goizueta, "U.S. Hispanic Theology," 17.

[52] See Elizondo, Galilean Journey, and The Future is Mestizo.

oppressor society, this is the Jerusalem Principle. Only love can triumph over evil to bring about life and health, this is the Resurrection Principle. Marginality and *mestizaje* form the foundation of his search for today's cultural equivalent of the Galilee experience—the place and the people in today's world with a similar identity and experience as the Galilean. Elizondo claims this experience is embodied in the experience of the Mexican American. Neither Mexican, nor American, the Mexican American traverses multiple and fluid borders. This multiplicity of identities creates a synthesis, a *mestizaje*, commonplace in those who exist with dual identities. Elizondo contends that it is the experience of *mestizaje* that forms the equivalent of the Galilee experience. He then fashions a theological interpretation of that experience. The key to understanding his reinterpretation is found in his concept of *mestizaje*, the generation of a new people from two disparate parent peoples. Rejected by both parent cultures as belonging to neither, each new *mestizo/a* forms a bridge across the two dissimilar parent cultures. This bridge allows the *mestizo/a* to travel in and out of either culture. The formation of each new *mestizaje* heals a racial-cultural frontier that previously divided humanity as boundaries are razed and a new unity is formed. As this new humanity emerges, differences are transcended and celebrated, as together, humans usher in the beginning of a universal humanity that all might truly be a united family of the planet earth. An integral part of Elizondo's reconstructive methodology is not the "us versus them" model of society, but the "common we" model which specifically aims for the benefit of all people.[53]

Currently, in an attempt to find a common bond between and among the diverse

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[53] Elizondo, Galilean Journey, 27.

community of communities that comprise the Latino/a people in the United States, there are

those who pursue the goal of establishing a common culture—that of *mestizaje*—in the hope

of universalizing and legitimizing the Latino/a experience. Furthermore, it is argued that all

Latinos/as can find an affinity within this cultural construction since "it is this one culture

that allows them to maintain and function within their socially constructed reality and

symbolic systems."[54] Such a construction has alternately been described as a *teología meztiza*

de la liberación or as a *mestizaje* theology.

> *Mestizaje* theology is a theology characterized by a fundamental search for
> identity leading to conscientization and liberation. *Mestizaje* theology entails
> socio-cultural conscientization: first, a rediscovery of cultural origins and a full
> appropriation of such origins, of biculturalism, in the face of widespread racism;
> second, an active commitment, as a bicultural community, to social confrontation
> and change in the light of severe marginalization and discrimination—political,
> economic, educational, and religious.[55]

A *teología meztiza de la liberación* is one that seeks a unique cultural identity, while

pursuing the goal of social and cultural liberation of the community. Significantly, a *teología*

meztiza de la liberación does not seek adhesion and assimilation with the dominant class, but

rather liberation of the *mestizo/a* community. In so doing, it accepts the suffering and

rejection of the *mestizo/a* as an epistemological point of departure for its own message of

inclusion and works out a vision of an expanding global *mestizaje* leading to a celebration of

diversity and a new life for humanity. To this end, a *teología meztiza de la liberación* is a

source of richness and vitality.

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[54] Orlando Espín, "A Multicultural Church?: Theological Reflections from Below," cited in Aquino, 19.

[55] Fernando F. Segovia, "Hispanic American Theology and the Bible: Effective Weapon and Faithful Ally," in We Are A People, ed. Goizueta, 38.

<u>Toward An Indigenous Epistemology</u>

Whereas the *realidad* of *mestizaje* is one with which I agree in principle, for the purposes of this project, I choose for the moment to dispense with the element of *mestizo/a* culture that attempts a universal synthesis of the European with the indigenous. I will focus instead exclusively upon the indigenous. For that reason I will utilize indigenous values and traditions to define an indigenous epistemological framework and formulate an integrative methodology. In searching for the indigenous roots that contribute to this framework, I will limit myself to a search for the indigenous roots of a Mexican American and Chicano/a epistemology.

My contention is that, by lifting up and reclaiming an indigenous identity, the Chicano/a will be empowered to affect change in his or her world. The goal is the unveiling of an epistemology, and subsequently a methodology, more specific to an indigenous framework. Not only does the search for a universal identity destroy the particularity out of which the Chicano/a operates, unintentionally or not, a *teología meztiza de la liberación*, dependent on European philosophical categories, can be construed as a denial of an indigenous paradigm of reality. The legitimacy of the ancient epistemic constructs will not be accepted by mainstream academia unless we, the indigenous descendants of the original inhabitants of the Americas, first reconstruct and subsequently affirm them. If we continue to do theology in ways that parallel established European methods, we are tacitly accepting as correct and sufficient not the epistemological, methodological and ideological assumptions transmitted to us by our ancestors and practiced today in our communities by our people, "but

those of the dominant, hegemonic groups in American society."[56] These are the very groups whose ideologies created the modernist and post-modernist philosophies at the source of the communities continued marginalization and suffering. Thus, it is imperative that Chicanos/as articulate a constructive indigenous epistemology and formulate from it a corresponding methodology.

An indigenous theology will share, in part, the methodological and epistemological principles to which all liberating theologies, including a *teología meztiza de la liberación*, subscribe. First and foremost is "the so-called crisis of modern civilization, or the questioning of modernity as cultural horizon."[57] The modernist position proclaimed a new era beginning with the discovery of the new world. This unprecedented time of discovery and exploration provided ample evidence to the old world that the rational, scientific mind was superior to the mind of the irrational native found on the new continent. In itself, this was proof that the historical agenda of the European conqueror was divinely mandated. The indigenous people of the Americas were bound to the new world as a defeated, subjugated object of the European historical agenda. In sharp contrast to the European agenda was the reality of the indigenous people of the continent. Their history as 'other-as-object' in relationship with the people of the old world began with the subversion of their philosophical categories. In the mind of the native, death and destruction was proof of their inferiority rather than proof of their superiority. Thus, to construct an indigenous pedagogy using

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[56] Orlando O. Espín, "Popular Religion as an Epistemology (of Suffering)," Journal of Hispanic Latino Theology, 2 (Nov. 1994): 57.

[57] Aquino, 11.

approaches that emerge from out of the horizon of modernist categories is ultimately self-defeating. The self-proclamation of the community as a community of 'others-as-subjects' of our own history compels the rejection of modernist categories as the hermeneutical horizon upon which categories of being and cosmos are fashioned; to do so is to accept the historical interpretation of the indigenous native as an inferior, irrational object.

As residents of the United States, Chicanos/as are subjected daily to a popular American cultural ethos that affirms the values of modernism and encourages individualism and rationalism. North American individualism is, according to Robert Bellah, "a belief that the individual has a primary reality whereas society is a second-order, derived or artificial construct."[58] North American individualism is derived from an enlightenment mentality that upholds the rational and material over against the non-material and sacred. One of the more important ramifications of individualism is the downplay of community relationships, including family, in the North American culture. North Americans, according to Bellah, are less interested in community and solidarity, substituting lifestyle enclaves instead. The net result is a resistance to living in solidarity. Ironically, individualism and the quest for the eternal universal are progeny of a philosophy that also promotes racism and oppression of the other.

Recently, Latino/a theologians have raised their voices collectively to critique both modernism and post-modernism and their failures to intersect with liberation theology.

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[58] Robert Bellah, et al., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 334.

Roberto Goizueta and Alejandro García-Rivera offer the most compelling arguments.[59]

Goizueta, limiting his study to "poststructuralist" or "deconstructionist" postmodernism,

begins with a critique of the rationalist and modernist mind set as a negation of human

experience—a position the postmodern mind supports. In fact, in search of a claim of

universality, the modernist and postmodernist find themselves at polar extremes. In its

reaction against the rationalist mind set, postmodernism replaces reason with "universal

indeterminancy, flux, ambiguity, non-identity, and particularity. . . . the subject is reduced to

'social location.'"[60] Goizueta concludes then, that, while "modernity claims the emergence

of the individual, rational subject, [the material] in the face of an irrational community and

tradition, [the non-material] post-modernity proclaims the death of the individual, rational

subject in the face of an admirably irrational intersubjectivity."[61] The idealization of either

extreme—reason versus affect, rational versus irrational, subject versus object, theory versus

human praxis—ignores the legitimacy of both poles and reduces them to a universalistic

epistemology that contributes to the continued marginalization of indigenous people and

every person construed as 'other-as-object.'

Still, the postmodern paradigm has much to offer an indigenous theology. For

instance, by acknowledging the importance of social location, aesthetics and otherness, it

gives a voice to those construed as 'other-as-object' by the modernist mind-set. However, at

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[59] Goizueta, "Rediscovering Praxis," 51-77; "In Defense of Reason," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology, 3 (Feb. 1996): 16 - 26. and Alejandro García-Rivera, "Creator of the Visible and the Invisible: Liberation Theology, Postmodernism, and the Spiritual," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 3 (May 1996): 35 - 56.

[60] Goizueta, "In Defense," 19.

[61] Goizueta, "Rediscovering Praxis," 74.

the same time, "postmodernism remains beholden to modern epistemological dualisms insofar as . . . the retrieval of otherness, social situation, and aesthetics is interpreted as a leap into irrationality."[62] This leap is idealized by postmodernism as the preeminent feature of the socially-located other.

In reality, most Latinos/as experience reality as both rational and relational—unafraid of the inherent tension between reason and affect. The apparent polar duality inherent in both modernism and postmodernism creates a situation whereby the modernist mentality ridicules the popular religiosity of the Mexican American as mere superstition and the post-modernist mentality idealizes it. Both modernism and postmodernism, in the end, act to objectify and reduce what is a concrete historical reality, the lived reality of the community, into an objectifiable, rational truth—the modern mind patronizing, the post-modern mind condescending. Both extremes further deny the inherent humanity and rationality of the indigenous world. Accordingly, every attempt is made to make the 'other-as-object' fit the dominant cultural stereotype. The net result is that the voice of the 'other-as-subject' continues to be stifled. Thus, post-modernity and paradigms which derive from it offer little or no hope to the construction of an indigenous epistemology.

García-Rivera offers an interesting analysis of the postmodern debate. In an issue of the Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology dedicated to the relationship between Liberation Theology and postmodernity, García-Rivera claims that theologies of liberation are not fundamentally incompatible with postmodernism. The principle difference between the two lies in the inability of postmodernism to accept the necessity of—or even the existence

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[62] Ibid., 73.

of—an author of a master narrative to critique, or an outside listener to address. Without a standard, there can be no common understanding. In an environment bounded by barriers of contextual preeminence, there exists a limited degree of correspondence, verbal or non-verbal, between any group desiring to converse with another outside its sphere of influence. Thus, by placing all human experience on an equal epistemological level, postmodernism succeeds in creating an environment where it becomes impossible to know oneself either in relation to an objective consciousness, to the author of a master narrative, or even "by intuitive self-reflection."[63] The net implication is that all mediation of reality and self occurs prior to thought, perception or identity. That is, post-modernity insists that the 'other-as-subject' represents to the self, difference. This is construed, in semiotic terms, as the difference of the sign. Existence of difference is an indication that there exists a boundary between the self and other—an other perceived as a subject other than the self. Within this paradigm, the other is no longer construed as 'other-as-subject' or as 'other-as-object,' as modernity posits, but now is construed only as 'other-as-difference.' Difference in itself becomes the mediator between subjects. According to García-Rivera, what is perceived in looking at the 'other-as-difference,' however, is the mirror reflection of the self. Because there exists no mediation between subjects, there can exist no author of human experience and there can be granted no reading of the experience of the 'other-as-subject.'

The methodology utilized by all theologies of liberation requires a critical reflection on praxis. It is essential from a liberation perspective, as well as a postmodern perspective, that human action—human experience—is taken seriously. Against postmodernism,

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[63] Alejandro García-Rivera, "Creator of the Visible and the Invisible," 41, paraphrasing Derrida.

however, theologies of liberation, and indigenous philosophies as well, claim that human experience may not only be seen but also read, i.e. they "have authorship."[64] Reflection on praxis—reading of the experience—comes after the human experience of praxis and demands a self-reflection on the doing; an act, that if we take Derrida as our reference, is not possible in the postpostmodernism mind set.

García-Rivera provides a means of transcending the road leading to 'other-as-difference' by suggesting that the sign carries within it a reality in and of itself—outside the experience of the external world or the experience of the internal world.

> Experience is more than a logic that divides experience (modernity's claim) or an illogic that fails to differentiate truth from falsity (postmodernity's claim). Experience tells stories.[65]

The sign itself conveys and contains intersubjective meaning. This third aspect of the sign, the referral, refers the sign to something other than itself. As such, the sign contains within itself a story that requires mediation through the role of a storyteller, a subject separate from the sign or the story referred to by the sign. The story transcends the difference of the sign itself and, through the telling and interpretation of the story, allows the 'other-as-difference' to become the 'other as subject.' This is possible because there exists a reality other than that of 'other-as-difference'; neither an 'other-as-object' nor a non-being, but rather an inter-subjective being that acts as storyteller and relater of subjective experience within human experience of being. Such a relationship allows a correspondence of ontic beings in relationship through the mediation of a third being—the storyteller. And while stories may

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[64] Ibid., 43.

[65] Ibid., 54.

trick, they do so only to interpret.[66] In the end, signs, stories and storytellers create an authored world of their own; a world that intrinsically coheres in an orthopathic sense as a community of ontic 'others-as-subject.' It is from within this world that an indigenous epistemology is constructed. Against modernity and post-modernity, an indigenous epistemology proclaims that community, or solidarity, is the very basis and ontic precondition for the emergence of the subject.

> The community implicit in praxis is not the modern Western community, understood as a voluntary association of atomic individuals; rather it is an organic reality in which the relationship between persons is not only extrinsic but, at a more fundamental level, intrinsic as well. In and through praxis, the intrinsic unity of person, community, and God is affirmed. In the praxis of the modern Western subject, the subject has ontological priority, for he or she chooses community; in the praxis of [*mestizos/as*], community has ontological priority, for it gives birth to subjectivity.[67]

The community implicit in an indigenous framework proclaims the priority of the cosmos as a precondition for understanding relationships between subjects as members of a community. In this construct the subject that is "self," can exist only in the presence of multiple 'others-as-subject.'

Knowledge, therefore, in a culture operating out of an indigenous framework, is constructed with priority given to relationships and connections between persons, places and the cosmos. Such knowledge is acquired and interpreted intuitively through the mediation of signs and symbols in the community. A correct reading of the signs demands that a third component be present. In this construct, the sign is neither a dyadic nor a triadic, instead

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Goizueta, "Rediscovering Praxis," 64. Goizueta uses the umbrella term "U.S. Hispanics."

there are multiple and fluid boundaries, borders and perimeters, each one contributing to the community's objective understanding of the sign and mediating that understanding to multiple 'others-as-subject' and the community. In these communities, meaning is derived through an intersubjective dialogue with the subjects in one's immediate environment—the family, the community and the cosmos. Truth, authored by the cosmos and its relationship to the community, is known first by the heart—which obtains and communicates truth in the *Nahuatl* world through flower, song and poetry. The learning of the symbols, meaning-making systems, traditions and rituals is a necessary part of educating the culture. This is a natural process whereby tradition is reinterpreted and transmitted from one generation to another via stories and shared lives.[68]

The Need for Multiple Methods

Employing an indigenous epistemology to construct a Chicano/a theology and pedagogy demands a distinctive many-pronged methodology. Therefore, the methodologies used in this project are multiple. Reading and interpreting the modern and historical signs and symbols used by the community of North American Latinos/as is accomplished ethogenically by exploring the spoken and written reflections of the community. Categorization and analysis of the data is accomplished through the use of a semiotics of culture. Clarification of the data and accounting for historical-cultural and anthropological realities is achieved by applying a subaltern interpretation to the data. Conscientization is

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[68] An indigenous epistemology is capable of constructing pedagogy nourished by an understanding of the cosmos infused with religious signification. Indigenous pedagogy, by definition, is derived from a reality whereby all education is infused with religious meaning and can be construed as religious education. Fundamentally, religious education involves transmitting information that leads to transformation and formation. An indigenous framework emphasizes the conversion of the earth as well.

achieved through the application of critical pedagogy. Each of these methods will be utilized with the community of Latinos/as surveyed in Chapter 1 as the focus of the project.

Chapter 1 utilizes a contextual praxis oriented methodology that acknowledges the modern day violent and unequal encounter of cultures as well as the anthropological dimensions of culture—including such phenomena as ethnicity, *mestizaje* and many-culture. I will employ Mary Elizabeth Moore's ethogenic methods as a basis for analysis.[69] Working with this methodology I will briefly explore the spoken reflections of the community and analyze, from a cultural-religious perspective, the Mexican American, Chicano/a culture. García-Rivera's understanding of many culture, as well as his methodological analysis of a semiotics of culture are applied in analyzing the data.[70] Much of the data and reflection on the data were framed in popular codes—stories, myths, symbols and rituals specific to the culture—that pose a problem of understanding and analysis. Because this task involves exploring non-traditional material, a traditional cultural analysis will be supplemented by semiotics, a method derived from the linguistic and cultural anthropological sciences.[71]

Another method that proves helpful in evaluating popular culture is the subaltern method, which takes the socio-political environment as a context to understand the world-views of an oppressed culture. A subaltern reading of a cultural text, based upon Antonio Gramsci's concept of the hegemony between classes, presupposes a dialectic of

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[69] Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Teach Us to Teach: Ethnic Congregations Teaching Through Their Stories," unpublished manuscript, Claremont School of Theology, 1998.

[70] Alex García-Rivera, St. Martin de Porres: The "Little Stories" and the Semiotics of Culture (Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 37.

[71] See Alejandro García-Rivera, "San Martín de Porres: Criatura de Dios," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 2 (Nov. 1994): 31.

accommodation and resistance to a hegemonic or dominant culture by a *dominated* or *subaltern* culture.[72] A subaltern reading attempts to understand or 'read' the nature of this dialectic and the world-view of the subaltern culture. A subaltern approach also allows an understanding of the social and historical situations in which are located the popular culture of the Chicano/a. The significance of this approach is that it recognizes that an oppressed culture is capable of constructing its own symbolic world of meaning with its own identity, often in opposition to the dominant culture's imposed identity. Thus, a re-reading of the text from below allows for an effective means of constructing and maintaining identity in the face of oppression. This method provides a major contribution to the nuances inherent in the messages exposed in the semiotics of culture.[73] After completing these analyses in Chapter 1, I will summarize the reasons why an alternative method of education is necessary for the Chicano/a.

The bulk of Chapter 2 examines statistics and reports that describe the struggle for education by *mestizo/a* Americans. After validating this reality, I will review the literature regarding identity formation and identity construction in the face of an oppressive system. This analysis will focus on the social and historical issues surrounding identity formation and education. Here I will utilize Antonia Darder's critical pedagogy and integrate her work with Keefe and Padilla's groundbreaking work on the relationship between ethnicity, acculturation

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[72] See Gwyn A. Williams, "The Concept of 'Egemonia' in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some Notes in Interpretation," Journal of the History of Ideas 21 (Oct.-Dec. 1986).

[73] Alejandro García-Rivera, "San Martín de Porres: Criatura de Dios," 31, 32.

and assimilation in the Chicano/a community.[74] These sources, combined with Oboler's emphasis on the importance of ethnic labels in the process of identity formation and Flores and Benmayor's understanding of cultural citizenship and the pursuit of identity and space, provide the basic core of the argument. The argument is that persons and communities appropriate socially constituted identities according to their race, class, national origins and understanding of their place in the larger society.[75]

Part II, Chapters 4 and 5, outline the *Mexica* system and philosophy of education, describing and analyzing their pre- and post-conquest strategy for educating persons and focusing on the concepts of formation of personhood and identity, "making-face, making-heart." Essential to this section is the reconstruction of *Nahuatl* cosmology and pedagogy. This is accomplished by investigating the written and spoken reflections of history. Chapter 5 demonstrates that, after conquest of México, the underlying philosophical framework of the people did not change. Essential to the development of this argument is demonstrating that an undercurrent of Mesoamerican beliefs and practices persisted over the centuries and exist today. Bonfil Batalla argues that there exists within contemporary México a significant body of accumulated knowledge derived from the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica that continues to influence the national ideology of the country.[76]

Part III, Chapter 6, constructs a theological anthropology consistent with the model of humanity found in the *Nahuatl* speaking peoples. Derived from indigenous categories and

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[74] Susan E. Keefe and Amado M. Padilla, Chicano Ethnicity (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987)

[75] See especially Oboler, chap. 4, "Hispanic Ethnicity, the Ethnic Revival, and its Critique."

[76] Bonfil Batalla, ibid.

ideals, it emphasizes the learning of the stories of the community, the formation of identity and the incorporation of one's self into a community and/or family. Drawing upon the works of Leonardo Boff, Jürgen Moltmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, I will then present a comparative reflection of the way in which these theologians construct ideas of community, God and social systems. Collectively, Boff, Moltmann and Bonhoeffer, offer a practical means of formulating a social doctrine of the Godhead that is compatible with the *Mexica* view of humanity. This dual analysis provides a means of connecting the dissimilar worlds represented by the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica and modern Christian theologians.

Part IV will construct a holistic ecology of indigenous education grounded in a framework of sociality as derived from *Nahuatl* philosophy and integrated with the previously delineated theological anthropology. A system of education which parallels *Mexica* pedagogy will empower the Chicano/a learner in the U.S. and result in the development of a multiple identity—one that will improve the ease with which persons move into and out of the dominant and subaltern culture. This constructive pedagogy dialogues with and builds upon the critical liberation and conscientizing methodologies derived from the writings of Paulo Freire. Freire's problem-posing methodology allows critical interaction with the oppressive structures prevalent in the immigrant and Chicano/a context. Furthermore, by posing problems, a critical pedagogy affirms the wisdom of the people as they name the historical reality of their oppression in the context of an inadequate system of education. The goal is to understand and name the oppressive structures from which oppression stems. This section also draws upon the insights of Gregory Cajete, Virgilio

Elizondo and Alejandro García-Rivera.

In constructing a located pedagogy, I must deal with the circumstances of my historically conditioned identity as part of a community, constituted by a past and a present. Affirmation of that identity in solidarity with my community is an inductive endeavor and takes seriously the task of story telling as socio-biography. A meaningful story that accurately reflects the "soul" of a community compels the use of the dialogical method grounded in Freire and contextualized by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. Dialogue is defined by Freire as a "relation of 'empathy' between two 'poles' engaged in a joint search."[77] Only through such dialogue can the reality of the past inform the issues of the present. Isasi-Diaz and Tarango, borrowing from Freire, refer to dialogue as a horizontal relationship that involves communication and inter-communication, the purpose of which is "the conscientization and liberation of the community." This process connects the content of the search with the contrasting poles involved in the dialogue. Facilitating the reconnecting of the content and the poles is best accomplished by a member of the community, "someone participating intensely in the forward march of the people . . . ."[78] This methodology, described in fuller detail in Chapter 1, is used to analyze the wisdom contained in the stories of the community, stories passed on from generation to generation since the time of the conquest.

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[77] See Paulo Freire, Cultural Action for Freedom (Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review, 1970), 45.

[78] Isasi-Diaz and Tarango, 95.

Part I

Mestizos and Education

Part I of this project reviews the many ways educators have neglected the *mestizo/a* learner. Beginning with the assumption that education cannot be neutral, I demonstrate that the dominant system of education in the U.S. communicates to the *mestizo/a* learner that the unique cultural traits of Latinos/as are substandard, inappropriate and perceived as inferior. Data from an ethogenic investigation of the local community of Latinos/as will be presented in Chapter 1. Interviews, dialogues, and observations of the community provide the data for the investigation. Analysis of the data is accomplished using a semiotic reading of culture. The data reveals a community whose world-view is different than that of the dominant American culture. Chapter 2 will examine the historical record in light of the cultural data cultivated in Chapter 1. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 provide an analysis of the reality experienced by the many groups of Latinos/as who live in Southern California. What emerges are the epistemological roots of the local community of *mestizo/a* Americans, roots that suggest that this community socially constructs reality using an indigenous framework. Chapter 3 focuses on the social and historical issues surrounding identity formation and the construction of a holistic identity in the face of an oppressive system of education. A case is made that successful education of the *mestizo/a* learner is achieved by utilizing resources derived from within the local community. It is demonstrated that a community-based, grassroots approach to education improves the ease with which persons move in and out of the dominant and subaltern cultures. Failure to successfully maneuver between these two worlds severely undermines the self-image and social mobility of the young Latino/a learner.

CHAPTER 1

The Chicano/a in Southern California: Cultural Considerations

No person from any culture, race or ethnic group is culture-bound or socially

determined. Each person has the capacity to grow, change and actively participate in the life

of the community in which he or she is placed. Every person is born with the capacity to

adapt to the ever changing landscape of the place he or she calls home. And, yet, each person

must deal with the circumstances of an historically conditioned identity as part of a

community, constituted by a past, a present and a future. The relative importance of this

collective identity in the construction of self-identity is debated in particular by the dominant

culture but also by the *mestizo/a* community. Implicitly, each *mestizo/a* is forced to cope as a

member of two mutually exclusive worlds: the dominant culture and as a member of *la raza*.

Venturing back-and-forth between these two worlds, Latinos/as forge a unique identity, a

combination of the powerful majority and the dissimilar minority. Newborn in nature, this

identity is often unsteady, unsure of its role in either world. Like the newly arrived

immigrant members of cultures and subcultures, the *mestizo/a* struggles to maintain a unique

identity in the face of an onslaught of forces demanding a singular American identity.[1]

This chapter will explore and evaluate the particularity of the *mestizo/a* American and

Chicano/a culture in Southern California. Included in the evaluation will be a discussion of

anthropological dimensions of culture such as ethnicity, *mestizaje* and many-culture. As a

basis for analysis, I will integrate Mary Elizabeth Moore's ethogenic methods with the major

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[1] See, for instance, Patrick J. McDonnell, "For Maya in Southland, Worlds Collide," <u>Los Angeles</u> <u>Times</u>, 27 May 1998, A1.

precepts of a dialogical methodology as derived from Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Paulo Freire.[2] I will utilize this contextual praxis-oriented methodology to delve into the reality experienced by the various groups of Latinos/as living in the Southern California region as they navigate the modern day violent and unequal encounter of cultures. The next step—analysis and interpretation of the cultural data—will be accomplished using a semiotic analysis of culture as described by Umberto Eco, Robert Schreiter, and Enrique Dussel and concretized by Alejandro García-Rivera in his work with descriptive semiotics.[3] García-Rivera's understanding of descriptive semiotics allows the analysis, from a symbolic perspective, of the various dimensions of *mestizo/a* American and Chicano/a culture. In its entirety, the chapter provides a cultural analysis of the reality experienced in Southern California by Mexican Americans and other groups of Latinos/as. This analysis allows me explain why an alternative method of education will better equip the young immigrant and Chicano/a learner to operate in the alien world presented by the North American system of education.

<center>A Contextual Praxis-Oriented Method</center>

In order to summarize correctly a community's hopes and dreams, there is a need to listen closely to the needs and desires of the community. There is a close link between the emotions felt by a people and their subsequent motivation to act; people tend to act on issues

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[2] Moore, "Teach Us to Teach." See also Mary Elizabeth Moore, "Dynamics of Religious Culture: Theological Wisdom and Ethical Guidance from Diverse Urban Communities," International Journal of Practical Theology 2 (1998): 240-62.

[3] Alex García-Rivera, St. Martin de Porres: The "Little Stories." Sydney Lamb distinguishes between descriptive semiotics, talking about "events of the world," and cognitive semiotics, "the mental information structures within an individual." Thomas A. Sebeok, Sydney M. Lamb, John O. Regan, Semiotics in Education: A Dialogue, Issues of Communication, 10th Seminar (Claremont, Calif: College Press, 1988), 9.

for which they have strong feelings. One of the keys to discovering the deepest feelings of a community is to listen without interpreting. This demands investigation of written, spoken and non-verbal reflections—the hidden dimension of the common story. The methods I employ here originated in an ethogenic description of community life as outlined by Moore. An ethogenic description of community life emphasizes the dynamics of life within a culture—its inner logic and relationships—as well as its relationship and means of communicating that relationship with the outside world.[4] In addition, an ethogenic analysis emphasizes change rather than stasis; as such it reveals the patterns of changing relationships within the community itself as well as patterns of changing relationships with the outside community. A primary concern of an ethogenic description is self-identity. The stories a community tells about itself and the ways in which it tells them reveal its implicit understanding of itself, its identity. A community's identity is born of a communal experience: ethnic, religious, and social. Community identity incorporates the shared beliefs, values, practices, and world view of a people. Communal in nature, this identity is not always explicitly obvious, either to those on the inside or to those on the outside.

To accurately describe the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the *mestizo/a* community, a constructive praxis oriented methodology requires that the investigator be deeply grounded in the subjective life of the community. Only through such immersion can the investigator read accurately and interpret the cultural signs, symbols and boundaries unique to a given community. These interpretations can then be used to uncover the codes essential to the construction of a distinctive community story—a story which reveals a unique public and

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[4] Moore, "Teach Us to Teach."

private identity. To accomplish the goal of reading the self-identity of the community, I immersed myself and subjectively interacted in the life of persons representing the community of Latinos/as in Los Angeles County. My purpose was to observe the cultural sign-functions; the ultimate goal was to read the cultural text. As much as possible, I became a part of each community as I engaged in observation, description, dialogue, question posing, and interviews with the various members of my family, the surrounding community, students, and professional associates. During observations and interviews, I listened for the following: What is the community worried about? happy about? sad about? angry about? fearful about? hopeful about? As depicted by Paulo Freire, these issues are significant because they suggest possibilities for future action and provide the foundation for creating the unique story of a community as it sees itself and as it is seen by the outside world.[5] Participants responses to questions, self-descriptions, and observations assisted me in collecting and processing the data and stories. The result is research which follows closely Moores methodology integrated with a dialogical methodology as developed and described by Isasi-Diaz.[6]

Following the process of interviews, conversations and observations, a final analysis of the data was prepared by identifying and describing the generative words used by the community—the words the community reveals as important. In addition, I also evaluated actions, patterns of interaction between members of families and communities, and important signs and symbols. These signs and symbols help to identify the codes that are essential to

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[5] See Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, rev. ed. (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1993). See chap. 3 for a description of generative themes and their role in problem posing education. See also Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers, rev. ed., vol. 1 (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1995), 53.

[6] Isasi-Diaz and Tarango, 95.

the identification of messages and stories—key symbols the community uses in describing itself.[7] From the above codes I identified generative themes and messages. Generative themes is a phrase introduced by Paulo Freire that refers to the messages people use to name and give meaning to their world.[8] These themes and messages, by portraying the immediate world as it is presently understood, represent issues about which a community is passionate and moved to action. They also provide helpful clues pointing the community in the direction of potential transformation. Ultimately, these themes and messages and their similarities and differences from the traditional "text" are fundamental to the construction of the story of a community.

<div align="center">Cultural Considerations: The Data</div>

Throughout this section I will refer to conversations, interviews and interactions witnessed in the North Orange County city of La Habra and the Southeastern Los Angeles County cities of Cerritos, Norwalk, Hawaiian Gardens, Artesia, Paramount, Santa Fe Springs, Pico Rivera, Bellflower, and Whittier. These observations occurred between September 1995 and February 2001. I will briefly report on the highlights of those findings. In cases where specific groups were surveyed, the ethnic make-up of the group was predominantly Mexican, Mexican American or "Latino/a." Central American countries were represented as well.

Interviews with Members of the Community

Interviews with members of the community were conducted on an informal basis and were explained to each of the participants as "engagement in friendly dialogue." My goal

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[7] Moore, "Teach Us to Teach."

[8] Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

was to gather information, individual and corporate—concerning shared community values and beliefs while respecting the private life of the community. Thus, in addition to asking questions, I listened to conversations and observed community rituals. Events in which I participated or observed, included worship at a local multi-lingual church, baptisms, family events, community-wide events, and holiday celebrations. I also engaged in numerous interactions with students and colleagues at a community college in Southern California whose service area is 64% Latino/a. Events recorded as second-hand information included news reports and transcripts of school board meetings, and meetings of community leaders and educators. Interviews with select persons were, with the permission of each participant, recorded in writing and transcribed.

Participants were randomly selected from amongst educators, managers and college students taking classes at a community college, community activists and leaders, members of churches in La Habra and Pico Rivera, and family members. The community surveyed can be broken down into the following general categories: students, youth and adult; educators, high school and college; citizens, long-term and short term; immigrants, citizens and non-citizens; and community activists. In each of these categories were those who were primarily Spanish-speaking, those who were bilingual and those who were primarily English-speaking. The latter group represented the group with the fewest number of members. Each of the sub-groups voiced words and themes which revealed a connection to different aspects of community life and ethnic identity.

The significant questions asked of each person included,

1.   Who are the most significant people in your life?
2.   How has your family or community influenced your story?

3.   What are your family's most important values?
4.   What words describe your relationship with the community?
5.   How do you describe your ethnic background/heritage?
6.   What types of problems affect the self-worth of people in your community?
7.   What are the gifts, or strengths, of your community or family?
8.   What hopes for the future do you have?
9.   What are the critical needs in your community?
10.   What have been significant events—positive or negative—in the history of this family? of this neighborhood, city, or ethnic community?
11.   What do you think are the important places, symbols, objects, and stories for this community?
12.   How would you describe the most basic beliefs, values, and practices of this family/community?

Ethogenic Analysis

Words and Phrases: The significant words and phrases recorded in conversations and interviews were, (although they appear here in English, many of the words were recorded in Spanish)

bilingual	multicultural	Anglo
white	Chicano/a	Costa Rica
Nicaraguan	Mexican	El Salvador
Hispanic	Mexican American	Latino
persons of color	family oriented	parents
grandparents	family	country
culture	community	support
similar values	respect	unity
togetherness	challenge	misunderstanding
concrete	real	Spanish
English	language	comfortable
like-me	different	control
lack-of-control	too much time	survival
community needs	loyalty	the way we do things
participation	immigrant	where I come from
death	funeral	Spirit
God	Religion	faith
church	educational disparity	education
stereotyping	racism	privilege
support systems	opportunity	violence
gangs	drugs	pride

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Virtually every person surveyed used terms such as education, pride, Latino/a, Hispanic, church, faith, loyalty, music, food and culture. The elderly and recent immigrants, whose primary language is Spanish, focused on the following words and phrases: respect, comfortable, similar values, family, family-centered, unity, togetherness, gossip, Spanish, English, Ecuadoran, Nicaraguan, Mexican, and faith in God. Words and phrases with negative connotations, such as "too much attention to time," "too fast," "misunderstanding," "uncomfortable" and "control" were heard frequently by these groups. In general, this group appeared to be willing to accept the fact that change is a natural part of life even if they may not understand all changes. Furthermore, recent immigrants were among the most likely to express an interest in the political life of the community and to advocate political and civic activism as a response to community issues.

Educators and community leaders repeatedly used words and phrases such as: education, educational disparity, racism, inequality, Chicano/a, culture, community, community needs and issues, outreach and activist. Students focused on the following words: school, jobs, careers, responsibility, family, time, lack of respect and lack of support. The issues perceived to be most critical by educators, included: racism, education, educational disparity, and immigration. The issues perceived to be most critical by non-educators, included: education, violence, immigration and survival.

Actions: The actions in which the community and its members partake, include:

multiple means of communicating[9]   bilingual communication
everybody speaking at once   discussions

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[9] For many persons traditional English and Spanish are insufficient and there has been the birth of a "Spanglish" dialect that better expresses a different identity.

arguments	debates
open expression of welcome to all	welcoming
celebrations	singing
cooking	dancing
eating	traditions
civic projects	surveying the community
changing previous ways of acting	conflict over change
respect for elders	life-cycle rituals
fear of civic authority	anger about injustice
prayer	grieving

Except for long-term citizens, all groups surveyed were adept at the use of storytelling and heated discussion as a means of communicating their opinions and relating to one another. Long-term citizens and those most assimilated into the dominant culture were most likely to shun these discussions as "chaotic." When they did allow themselves to engage in storytelling or discussions, it was generally for the purpose of providing an answer to a question or resolving a personal issue. Virtually every group engaged in bilingual communication, alternating English and Spanish. Even persons who were predominantly English speaking used Spanish words and phrases in their conversations. Welcoming of outsiders and engaging in multiple celebrations were also common amongst all groups. Students, in general, were more likely to participate in civic projects and least likely to fear civic authority or to be involved in surveying the community. Educators, especially those who were deeply grounded in civic projects, participated in multiple activities within the community. Like community activists, these professionals expressed a deep seated anger and distrust of the "establishment" due to unresolved injustices and a perception of racism and discrimination aimed at the Latino/a community. These two groups, educators and community activists, were also engaged in activities aimed at mobilizing the local Latino/a community to specific actions. Long-term residents and those persons born in the United

States maintained a fear of civic authority as well as an anger concerning perceived injustices. These groups also tended to show great respect for elders and participated in life-cycle rituals, family based patterns of interaction and celebrating traditions. Recent immigrants were most likely to insist on respect for elders and participated extensively in family based celebrations and life-cycle rituals. They were also least likely to have knowledge of or access to public services. This is the group that was most eager to change its patterns of behavior and to engage the community in action aimed at improving access to the goods and services.

Patterns of Interaction: These are reflective of the ways in which persons and groups of people interact with other people both in the community and without.

- limited interaction with the surrounding community
- linking of family and community
- traditional patterns of relationships
- control of older or grown children
- respect for authority/elders (especially grandmothers)
- spiritual undertones in all relationships
- newcomers and visitors are treated as part of the family and not singled out
- no visible class distinctions made
- fear of difference or changing relationships
- expectations of fixed and known patterns of interacting in relationships
- relaxed relationships
- acceptance of fate/death
- outward acceptance of different opinions
- passionate discussion of issues
- ability to cope with disagreements and tensions between persons

Three general sub-themes centered around establishment and maintenance of relationships were detected while observing patterns of interaction. Broadly, these can be labeled "Patterns of Relationship," "Expectations of Relationships" and "Conflict in Relationships." In virtually every family, church, school and social organization, newcomers and visitors were treated as part of the community and were not singled out or rejected. Each

of these groups, having few expectations of others, exhibited strong welcoming behavior. Furthermore, no visible class distinctions were made nor were many signs of conflict displayed. Students, particularly younger students, were more likely to accept difference and be comfortable living with difference. They had high expectations that all persons were to be treated well and were most likely to harbor negative feelings when rejection due to difference became an issue. An example was provided by a young boy who was asked to draw a picture describing his relationships with friends at school. He drew a picture of four boys and included this caption: "This is about when we made fun of a boy named Urfano, we laughed at the way he talked. We felt bad so after that we apologized." In this instance, conflict was open, somewhat expected, and eventually overcome.

Educators and community activists also conveyed outward acceptance and expectation of difference. In this group of respondents, however, it was concretized by the numerous opinions expressed around various issues as well as by passionate discussion of controversial issues. This groups of respondents was especially able to cope with conflict and easily handled disagreements and tensions within the group. Long-term citizens and persons born in the United States had a tendency to assert more social control over their older or grown children and to have greater expectations of people in relationships. In general, in this group of respondents, roles were more fixed, and conflict was more likely to cause a long-term disagreement. Immigrants and short-term residents favored limited interaction with the surrounding community and preferred to link family and community whenever they were involved in civic events. This group of respondents preferred fixed and known patterns of interacting in relationships, especially regarding family relationships and control of

children. An interesting observation was the underlying spiritual tone and expectations of relationships found in the majority of persons surveyed. This was both outwardly expressed, alluded to during conversation, or observed in the respectful way in which family, friends and *compadres* were esteemed.

Submission to fate was greatest in persons born and raised in the United States. While acceptance of fate was expressed by immigrants and short-term residents, its expression was related to faith and spirituality rather than to a fatalistic or cynical perspective of the world.

Signs and Symbols: The significant signs and symbols utilized by the community are,

multiple languages used simultaneously	languages
people interacting	descriptive story-telling
families/groups together	celebrations
dance	music
community members at special events	food
candles	male dominance/leadership
children as centers of attention	elders as centers of attention
encouraging traditions	racial/ethnic make-up

The signs and symbols utilized by the community were varied and diverse depending upon the community and the people involved. "Storytelling," "multiple interaction with many people" and "speaking in two languages" were the symbols utilized by all groups regardless of age or immigrant status. Students, especially younger students, tended to describe events verbally in either English or Spanish and were most likely to utilize music as a means of relating to one another. In younger respondents, storytelling was for the purpose of relating to one another and was used rarely for arguing or for persuasion. Educators and community activists preferred to adopt bilingual verbal communication and appeared to follow male dominated leadership patterns. Here, storytelling was used primarily for the

purpose of discussion or persuasion.

Long-term citizens and those born in the United States emphasized traditions and community events; however, this group of respondents was least likely to engage in bilingual communication and least likely to utilize storytelling as a means of communicating information or to use storytelling to persuade. Recent immigrants preferred to speak in their native language and appeared less concerned with publicly following traditional patterns of relating or maintaining traditions; however, this group was more likely to insist that elders were respected and heard. Recent immigrants were also most likely to utilize storytelling as a device for conveying personal information as well as using it as a device to persuade and teach. This groups of respondents was the group most eager to learn the traditions and rituals of "the Americans."

Generative Themes

Drawing from the analysis described above, generative themes were identified. These themes and messages about which the members of the community are passionate and moved to action are essential to the construction of the story of a given community. The following themes and messages were identified: cultural uniqueness, cultural identity experienced as a bi-location, many-cultural and multi-lingual communication, self-image influenced by multiple factors, capacity to critique the community, fixed and changing patterns of interaction and survival. Each of these issues is described below.

Cultural Uniqueness: Cultural uniqueness describes the comfort with which people name themselves and affirm their unique identity as part of a specific ethnic or cultural group. Data that supports the existence of this theme, included:

- Comfort in identifying one's culture as "Latino/a" or "Chicano/a"
- Discomfort identifying oneself as "separate" or "ethnic"
- Desire to be accepted for "what we are"
- Desire to be accepted as "equal"
- Disdain for accepting a peripheral cultural position
- Pride in a unique or "different" culture
- Attempt to maintain cultural standards and traditions

When cultural identity as part of the extended family of Latinos/as is considered on its own, respondents expressed very little discomfort or dissonance with the *Latinidad* of their identity. Every group surveyed expressed pride in their ethnicity and culture. The urgency to maintain one's cultural identity was expressed to a greater extent by recent immigrants and third generation descendants of immigrants from México.

Cultural Identity—Bi-location: When cultural identity as a Latino/a in a non-Latino/a world is discussed, an interesting phenomenon occurs: most respondents answered in ways that indicated they experienced daily reality as an entering and exiting of disparate worlds and multiple ways of being. That is, they experienced their cultural identity in terms that indicated a dual identity or a bi-location. The idea of psychologically being in two places at once indicates a domain of intense activity—a semiotic border undergoing critical changes.[10] Bi-location describes the ways in which respondents claimed to experience daily reality. Most of them perceived their lives as a continual entering and exiting of disparate worlds and multiple ways of being. Data that supports the existence of this theme, included:

- Comfort in identifying cultural uniqueness as "Latino/a" or "Chicano/a" contrasted with discomfort identifying oneself as "separate" or "ethnic"
- Bi-lingual and multiple ways of communicating contrasted with monolingual, mono-cultural communicating

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[10] García-Rivera, St. Martin de Porres: The "Little Stories", 37.

- The ability to communicate via storytelling contrasted with fixed and linear communication
- Limited interaction with the surrounding community contrasted with the desire to link family and community
- A strong sense of cultural uniqueness contrasted with the expressed reality that Latino/a culture is not understood by dominant society
- Desire to be accepted as Latinos/as for "what we are" contrasted with a desire to be accepted as "equal" participants in the social-political process
- Disdain for accepting the position of peripheral contrasted with a disdain for things which appear to be central and a contempt for those who appear to be "selling out"
- Identification with country of origin contrasted with the way in which society classifies us: "Hispanic" vs Country of origin.

Factors which influenced the feeling that the respondent's lives were experienced as an abundance of multiple realities, included

- Being around those who are "like-me" vs feeling different
- Desire to belong vs limited interaction with the surrounding community
- Emphasis on the individual vs emphasis on the community (family, including parents, grandparents, and elders)
- Different languages
- Different ways of celebrating
- Differences between the dominant culture and the culture of origin, including: dissimilar values, contrasting emphasis on respect, lack of respect for elders as centers of attention, discrepancy between the available support systems and the "difference in the way we do things."

The phenomena of bi-location and its manifestation as the existence of a multiple identity indicates that there is a strong need for reaffirmation of a socially constructed multiple identity. That is the focus of the next chapter.

Many-cultural, Multi-lingual Emphasis: Multi-lingual communication signifies much more than the ability to speak in two or more languages. Rather, it indicates a familiarity with multiple styles and forms of communication. This is true even of non-Spanish speaking Latinos/as who also demonstrate an ability to communicate in the Latino/a world. Data that supports the existence of this theme, included:

- The significance of three languages: Spanish, English and "Spanglish"
- Storytelling as a method of communication
- Communication via body-language
- An emphasis on multiplicity
- A diverse understanding of the community: cultures within cultures.

The significance of multiple forms of communication and the necessity of communicating in both English and Spanish is felt even amongst children. Two respondents, a young boy and a young girl, wrote the following:

> *yo tengo un problema, mi problema es no hablar bien el ingles*
> (I have a problem, my problem is I cannot speak English well.)

> *Yo tengo una amiga que no sabe hablar ingles. Cuando ella jugaba conmigo mis otras amigas se burlaban de mi y de mi amiga porque no sabia hablar ingles.*
> (I have a friend that doesn't know how to speak English. When she plays with me, my other friends make fun of us because she doesn't know how to speak English.)

This emphasis on communication in multiple languages is especially felt by second and third generation respondents who are predominantly English speaking. This group, in particular, described feeling "in the middle" or "left out." Many of these respondents resented losing jobs to persons who were fluent in Spanish and mentioned returning to school to re-learn the language.

Additional elements of this theme include the use of body language as a style of communication and the utilization of storytelling as a method of describing events. The most common means of using the body to communicate was the use of multiple hand motions during speech. Storytelling, a common method of communication in oral and residually oral societies, is used as a means of negotiating relationships between selves and the extended community. This will be further described below in the section describing "Oral Cultures."

<u>Self-image Influenced by Multiple Factors</u>: "Self-image," "self-esteem" and "self-worth," translated *alto concepto* or *auto estima* for the non-English speaking person, was not defined for respondents. One definition arrived at by the community of English speaking respondents was that, "self-image is the way a person views him or herself as a result of internal factors, environmental factors and personal experience." Listed here are factors influencing a persons "self-esteem" as identified by the community.

- Economic factors, including social class, job status and income
- Physical appearance, including looks, skin and hair color, and size
- Mental, physical, and emotional health
- Level of education
- Knowledge of and use of practical skills
- Environment, including social acceptance and level of contact with the dominant society
- Level of accomplishments and the ability to share those accomplishments
- Family, including type of upbringing and amount of affection
- Cultural life experiences that engender a sense of belonging at home, school and in public
- Stereotypes perpetrated by dominant society and internalized by the Latino/a community
- Race, gender and sexual orientation
- Immigrant status: immigrant vs citizen
- Self esteem is culturally conditioned not culturally determined
- Ideas of self esteem are based on what's accepted by the larger society

Remarkably, recent immigrants and their older children were the least likely to experience a "negative self-image." For most immigrants, the concept of "self-image" or "self-worth" was not one with which they were familiar. Only school-aged students and second and third generation descendants of immigrants related strong feelings of negative or poor "self-image." Significantly, these are the groups—school-aged students and second and third generation descendants of immigrants—that interact with popular American culture on a daily basis.

When asked to identify causes for diminished feelings of "self-worth," respondents identified the necessity of relating on a daily basis with people, media, and an environment that promoted popular American culture. These various contexts reinforced the reality that the dominant society is different from the Latino/a world. Confronted by multiple competing forces, it became easy to internalize beliefs about inadequacy of the self and the community. Furthermore, persistent interaction with a racist system and a subconsciously biased people, influences ones sense of self and community. Answers given by respondents indicated that there is still a need to deal with internal and external forces that influence feelings of self worth.

Capacity to Critique the Community: Among the groups surveyed, there was no specific group that declined to critique the community; rather, differences were discerned around peoples willingness to publicly critique the community. Furthermore, community activists and recent immigrants were the most willing to critically examine the root causes of issues the community views as critical. Data that supports the existence of this theme, included:

- There is a strong disdain for those who "use the system"
- There is a refusal to accept what is not earned
- Amongst immigrants: there is a resolve to form action groups to ensure a public voice
- The creation of "myths" as a means of explaining community issues
- Amongst those born in the U.S.: there is an inward self-critique of the community based upon a mythical understanding of the problem

The ability to grow is dependent upon the ability to recognize the need for change. There was strong agreement by all respondents that the local community is in need of both growth and change. Respondents named inequitable education, immigration, survival, and

lack of political power as issues facing their communities. Each community also indicated that these are issues around which the community could be mobilized to action. The difference occurred with regard to blame: Recent immigrants were less likely to blame the local Latino/a community, whereas long term-residents were more likely to blame other Latinos/as or Latinos/as who "had an agenda." This was implied during multiple interviews when persons responded with the phrase, "we're our own worst enemy." Those belonging to the latter group of respondents were the least likely to have engaged in actions to improve the community.

Fixed and Unchanging Patterns of Interaction: This theme was a feature of specific families, including parents and children, rather than of communities in general. However, it was identified in many respondents. Data that supports the existence of this theme, included:

- Ability to cope with disagreements and tensions between persons, especially family
- Expectation that males will dominate most relationships
- Respect for elders
- Lack of understanding between parents and children, especially in first generation families

Relationships between members of families and between and amongst members of the larger Latino/a community follow traditional and established patterns. Male domination of social relationships, respect for elders, social control of children, and the ability to cope with disagreements and tensions between persons are ways in which these patterns are made visible in today's world. Much of the conflict in Latino/a families is a result of the changes taking place in these established patterns of relationships. As children become more acculturated into popular North American culture, they bring change into the family—a change that is not always well accepted.

Survival and Cultural Resilience: Issues of survival implied more than financial or material survival. Respondents mentioned three specific areas of concern: community survival, family survival and personal survival. Regardless of the social problem or the perceived root cause, virtually all respondents at some point alluded to survival as an important issue in their lives. Ultimately, this struggle for survival constitutes a struggle for legitimacy. Data that supports the existence of this theme, included:

Community Survival
- Limited interaction with the dominant surrounding community
- Capacity to Critique the Community
- Reject labels and solutions imposed by the outside dominant culture by changing the meanings of events and the significance of issues to fit the needs of the local community
- Creation of "myths" as a means of explaining community issues
- Conflict between respect for and desiring to maintain historic traditions and changing in response to people's needs
- Ability to cope with disagreements and tensions between persons
- Passionate discussion of issues facing the community and acceptance of different opinions
- Disdain for those who "use the system"
- Refusal to accept what is not earned.
- Male dominance/leadership vs traditional patterns of relationships
- Difficulty in creating leadership roles for women.

Personal Survival
- Public self-control vs private questioning of ability to control
- Desire to provide for oneself and one's family
- Expectations of fixed and known patterns of interacting in relationships

Family Survival
- Fear of difference or changing relationships
- Fear of the influence of popular American culture on children
- Control of older or grown children
- Respect for authority/elders (especially grandmothers)

The fact that community, family and personal survival were recognized by respondents as issues of critical importance, indicates a fundamental disparity between the

myth of the "American Dream" and the reality of life experienced by the Latino/a in modern America. The socio-historical reality that places the Latino/a in a society where the prevailing world view is different from its own presents the community with a daily struggle for psycho-social legitimacy and survival. Personal survival within the popular culture of the United States, however, is not without cost. In the next chapter I will demonstrate that failure to maneuver successfully between the world of the dominant culture and the world of the primary culture severely undermines the self-image and social mobility of the young Latino/a learner. Frequently the price is the loss of one's core identity; this in itself constitutes an oppressive environment. Forfeiting one's core identity many times results in ethno-stress, a psychological defense mechanism that is the end result of a response pattern stemming from the disruption of a person's cultural life and belief system.[11] Loss of one's culture and the beliefs one holds as important creates a sense of hopelessness that for many young Latino/a children proves difficult to overcome. For this reason, I suggest that for the *mestizo/a*, the construction of a multiple self-identity is crucial. On a practical level, affirmation of these "many identities" in solidarity with the community of immigrants and other descendants of our indigenous traditions is essential.

<u>Semiotics and Cultural Analysis of Chicano/a Culture</u>

The next step in this project, analysis and interpretation of the cultural data, will be accomplished using a methodology derived from cultural semiotics. Reflections about daily

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[11] Gregory Cajete, <u>Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education</u> (Durango, Col.: Kivakí Press, 1994), 187. Cajete believes all education is aimed toward the spiritual development of the person in relationship to the community. As a Native American educator, Cajete claims that the Native American is the most educationally schizophrenic person in today's society. Psychological captivity–self-hate and disrespect for one's culture–is a direct result of what Cajete terms ethno-stress. Cajete believes that education must return to its original orientation and once again become indigenous education.

life and culture are often expressed in popular codes and symbols whose meaning are not always obvious to the outsider. The meaning imparted to codes or symbols is conditioned by the generation of conventional rules specific to a community. In Latino/a communities, as noted by Virgilio Elizondo, much of religious reflection is symbolic-cultural. It is the hidden subtlety of these reflections that poses a problem of analysis.

> The symbolic level of the life of a culture is difficult to penetrate, because symbols are at once so obvious to those for whom they are "natural," and yet so difficult to explain to others . . . They are so deeply embedded in group consciousness that they appear to be the unquestioned principles of action.[12]

Descriptive semiotics allows the analysis, from a symbolic perspective, of the various dimensions of *mestizo/a* American and Chicano/a culture. Unquestionably, these symbols and reflection on these symbols—unlike propositions, documents, or dialectic—take on a tremendous variety of forms and require the understanding of specific community rules or codes. A code is a necessary part of an interpretation, providing "rules which generate signs as concrete occurrences . . . ."[13] Because reflections on dimensions of culture in the Latino/a community commonly took place by those on the less powerful side of history, and "the conquered left few written records, such reflections . . . . must be found in other non-traditional ways."[14] Consequently, reflection with and on behalf of *mestizo/a* Americans

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[12] Elizondo, Galilean Journey, 28.

[13] Eco, 49. This understanding differs from Freire's, who defines a code as "a concrete presentation of a familiar problem, about which the group present has strong feelings." Cited in Hope and Timmel, 55. Susanne Langer defines a symbol as a "vehicle for the conception of objects. To conceive a thing or a situation is not the same thing as to 'react toward it' overtly or to be aware of its presence. . . . it is the conceptions not the thing that symbols directly 'mean.'" Susan Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 171f.

[14] Alejandro García-Rivera, "San Martín de Porres: Criatura de Dios," 26.

cannot rely on traditional treatises. Traditional cultural analysis must be supplemented by methods from the linguistic and cultural anthropological sciences. This allows access to the deeper cultural reflections of the community.

Therefore, to assist in identifying and analyzing the cultural data, I will utilize the methodological tools borrowed from the social sciences that focus upon culture as a network of signs or symbols. The most commonly utilized methods are those which employ cultural semiotics grounded in a subaltern interpretation of the stories. Semiotics, as described by Robert Schreiter, studies signs, signification and signifying practices, as well as the relationships between signs, codes and the way they impart meaning in everyday life.[15] Signs are any <u>thing</u> which stands for some <u>thing</u> else; any <u>thing</u> which can be translated into another form of expression.[16] A semiotic analysis of a given community allows the evaluation of the specific codes, sign-functions and symbols prevalent in that community.

Modern semiotics began early in the twentieth century and originated from two sources, the American philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce, and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Both Pierce and Saussure were curious as to how structures of cognition and language produce meaning, as opposed to the resultant meaning itself. Today Saussure is the more prominent of the two because his core insights validate the essence of post-modernism and the process of deconstruction. He discerned that the signifier and the signified have no

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[15] Schreiter, <u>Constructing Local Theologies</u>, 56-73. Signs are of many levels, but the fundamental one is language. Enrique Dussel understands language as, "a totality of significant moments formed by elemental units that express phonetically (or in writing) the totality of sense in a moment of its history. The interpreted totality represents the world, and language expresses the interpretation." Enrique Dussel, <u>Philosophy of Liberation</u> (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985), 119.

[16] Eco, 27.

essential relationship. The signifier is that part of a sign which stands for the signified, as a word or a DNA codon; the signifier is that which carries meaning. The signified is that part of a sign which is stood for by the signifier; the signified refers to the meaning that is carried. For example, the signifier "red" is not itself red. In the process of making these distinctions, Saussure exposed the arbitrary nature of all language and language-like systems.

The system created by Charles Sanders Pierce—who distinguished the icon, index and symbol—is more practical for visual art. In Pierce's system an icon is a proper sign where meaning is due to physical resemblance or similarity in appearance between the signified and signifier. For example, a map is an icon of its territory. An index is a proper sign where meaning is due to a physical connection or causal relation between the signified and signifier. For example, smoke is an index of fire. A symbol is a sign where the sign-function is a conventional rule or code. Symbols convey a meaning that becomes dependent on a process of interpretation. For this reason, symbols stimulate humans to creativity and thought.

The task of semiotics is to analyze the conditions that contribute to the distinction between signs and other kinds of signification. In addition to describing the similarities and dissimilarities between assorted ways of conveying signification, semiotics also describes the different ways in which several, sometimes conflicting, systems of signification collaborate to transmit meaning. This offers the investigator a horizon upon which are found answers to questions of how "things" become carriers of meaning. Thus, it is learned that "we are never dealing with reality in the final way," but with "systems of signs which become codes through which we capture the meaning of our lives and communicate our understandings and

feelings about ourselves, others, and ultimate reality."[17] Ultimately, signs, symbols and codes can be no more or no less than interpretive tools for engaging and constructing reality.

<u>Descriptive Semiotics</u>

Descriptive semiotics, as a concentrated focus on sign-functions in all their manifestations, offers the opportunity to examine the structures and rules governing all forms of signification. Even the elements of the social structure of a culture or society can be called signs and fall within the sphere of semiotic investigation.[18] Upon entering a culture, a person, like a young child, very soon discovers the sense of the sign—"that is, the reference of a sign, a signifier, to a signified."[19] Further understanding leads to further discovery of multiple "senses of the signs"; this cumulative uncovering of layer upon layer of meaning is what allows newcomers to begin to communicate within a foreign culture. Keep in mind, however, that a cardinal principle of semiotics is that not all signs are straightforward, visible, or even recognizable facets of life. Sign-functions, by definition, are ambiguous. For this reason Eco defines a sign or a sign-function as anything which can be used to lie.[20] For example, in the United States, a crucifix or cross on the front wall of a long room with many colorful windows produces characteristic images, expressions, or emotions in anyone who notices it and is familiar with the appropriate customs. This combination of a <u>token</u>, (the

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[17] Robert L. Browning and Roy A. Reed, <u>The Sacraments in Religious Education</u> (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1985), 72.

[18] Eco, 27.

[19] Dussel, <u>Philosophy</u>, 119: "The thing shows, manifests, uncovers itself. The discovery of the thing, of the being, is truth. Truth goes from the thing to interpretation; semantics goes from interpretation to sign," Ibid.

[20] Eco, 7.

particular room with colorful windows and a cross), and its representamen, (the conventional signifying of the form), with its interpretants, (entailed images, expressions, and emotions) is what Eco identifies as a sign-function. For this reason, the person who walks into an open long hall with a cross at the front, sits or kneels down to pray and is arrested for an illegal activity may legitimately feel lied to. In this model, meaningfulness is equated with the possibility that, for any given thing, some other thing is entailed by it or stands for it. Understanding of a thing is equated with a particular person's ability to follow the recognized conventions of entailment. It is the recognized conventions of entailment that may appear to the outsider to be illogical.

Contributing to the ambiguity is the realization that everyday signs both denote and connote. That is, they carry an immediate referent—the denotation or meaning—as well carrying a final or ultimate reference to the world—the connotation.[21] An item in a system of relations denotes certain meanings that can be organized into paradigms. The hidden meaning, connotation, of these paradigmatic functions are linked to codes and encoding. Different codes constitute connotations. As such, codes are a logical basis for connections drawn between the components of a sign, a set of signs clustered together, and social organization. A code enables one to see signs as instances of rules and interpretations, as well as to map one set of signs or another.

> Signs . . . connect to one another by means of codes or rules which, in "creative collaboration," produce the messages in a culture. A linguistic metaphor for this process would be a sentence. If words are signs, and a meaningful sentence is made of a string of these words, then the rules (the grammar) which string

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[21] Denotation of a thing in a given context is in the end connotative of the totality of that specific world. "A signifier no longer totally, but only partially, signifies its signification," Dussel, 120.

together such words into that sentence are the codes.[22]

In a cultural "text," signs replace words, codes replace grammar, and messages replace sentences. A cultural text can consist of a single sign, but more commonly it is a series of multiple signs held together by a set of codes and/or by a common message. The task of a semiotic analysis of culture is to "read" the cultural text—the basic unit of analysis—"locate its signs, the codes that place the signs in dynamic interaction, and the messages that are conveyed."[23] Finally, a cultural text can serve as a subset of a larger text of a culture, for example, the gestures that are part of a ritual can be understood as a separate sign system.[24]

Since semiotics deals with perceived differences in context that generate meaning, rather than the reality of the external world, it provides an abundant vocabulary of terms and techniques for analysis of the codes and signs that constitute the reality of systemic relations. Yet, even with these instances of rules and interpretations, sign-functions within a culture are incomplete; they are inherently dependent upon context and exhibit layer upon layer of multiple meaning. Context—that which is brought to the situation—inundates the sign, and is shaped by paradox and uncertainty in message. To communicate in ways understandable to those in close proximity, persons depend on conventional contexts and interpretative processes. These social conventions firmly link the expression and its related content to produce a sign. The semiotic model—which relies on comparing differences within a

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[22] Alejandro García-Rivera, "San Martín de Porres: Criatura de Dios," 26.

[23] Schreiter, 61.

[24] Ibid.

context—is utilized to isolate changes in the function of signs, sign-vehicles, paradigms and codes and also to analyze meaning. These changes blend with diversity of meanings as fundamental features of communication.

> the unsolved problems which cultural semiotics attacks are the reconciliation of the static and synchronic with the dynamic and diachronic within cultural systems, the relation of meaning and content to form and structure, and the question of how cultural systems are internally organized, how such systems change, how they are related to each other, and finally what is the significant unit of culture.[25]

But stability and change are not simply a matter of interpersonal proximity or cultural experience. Interpersonal and personal communication and interaction are shaped increasingly by the imagery of the popular or dominant group. In this way outside imagery, in conjunction with immediate experience or firsthand knowledge of events, contribute to cultural reality and cultural myth.

Semiotic Analysis of Culture

Clearly, universal cultural codes—cultural universals—do not, indeed cannot, exist. Alejandro García-Rivera provides a useful means of dealing with cultural differences with his semiotic analysis of little-stories, the dynamic boundaries they denote and the need for a social ethic of "many culture" as opposed to an ideology of multi-culture.[26] An ethic of many culture allows an equitable analysis of culture, even from the perspective of the non-dominant group. When such an analysis is carried out in the context of the violent and unequal encounter of cultures, it faces two related issues: identity and change. Of the most

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[25] Ibid., 51-52.

[26] See Alex García-Rivera, St. Martin. An important corollary of the principle of "many culture" is the idea that this ethic respects the human reality that cultural differences are not superficial and therefore *cannot* be fully understood by those outside the culture. See Chapter 7 for a more complete analysis of "many culture."

significant functions is the establishment of identity—the "Who are we"—as opposed to non-identity—the "Who are we not." Furthermore, identity is communicated in juxtaposition with the broader outside world. As the broader outside culture changes, the changes affect the inner life of a community and its means of self-communicating its ethos to and amongst its members and to the outside world. Such changes can be especially disruptive to those whose understanding of the world is different from the dominant, popular culture.

Each sign-function and sub-theme, sustained by their unique cultural codes, points toward a unique message. Each message acts as a horizon upon which identity is constructed. Each message and theme discerned by and within a culture is a unit of identity; an identity circumscribed from within and from without by implicit borders. For example, in differentiating between public and private lives, we are really delineating the construction of individual or group identity. That which ultimately identifies a person as a Chicano/a—the "Who are you?"—is that which is taught in the private realm. However, how a person responds in the public realm, and hence another factor in the construction of identity, is conditioned by that which is imposed by the external or public world—the "Who are you not?" The border is that point at which the "Who are you?" and the "Who are you not?" collide. This clash—which is in reality a clash of semiospheres, also referred to as semiotic systems—occurs as a result of mis-reading and misunderstanding sign-functions as signifiers of cultural information. The signifying sign-function in one system does not recognize the significance of the sign-function in another. Concurrently, mis-reading information occurs as a result of this clash of semiotic systems. To paraphrase Lamb, there is a limited degree of

correspondence between the semiotic structures.[27]

To further complicate matters, the horizon upon which identity is constructed, in addition to possessing a limited degree of correspondence between itself and outside semiotic systems, is simultaneously a sign-function. And, like all sign-functions, the horizon is a dynamic one, one which resonates with energy and movement from within and without and, by definition, must continually fluctuate. Therefore, the border between systems and cultures, by definition also, symbolizes change when any shift in boundaries takes place. This change reflects the dynamic equilibrium forever present between two or more cultures; in this case when a shift occurs between the "Who are you?" and the "Who are you not?" Persons representing dissimilar cultures in today's society continually discover new ways, positive and negative, of relating to one another. These new ways of relating to one another are no more than a reflection of the dynamic nature of sign-functions, semiotic systems and the dynamic boundaries between semiotic systems. These dynamic border-lines are known in the semiotics of culture as "semiotic boundaries."

> Semiotic boundaries are often recognized by noting what semioticians call 'binary opposites' in a cultural text. Binary opposites are antithesis, such as 'us-them,' or even 'up-down.' These are not the antithesis of a Hegelian dialectic but the symptom of a semiotic boundary delineating differences which create identity.[28]

In reality, binary opposites are not opposites in search of a synthesis, rather, they are opposites which point to the inherent tension and paradox between cultures and define where one culture begins and the other ends. Maintenance of ethnic identity is achieved by

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[27] Sebeok, Lamb, and Regan, 28.

[28] Alex García-Rivera, St. Martin de Porres: The "Little Stories", 31f.

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establishing symbolic internal boundaries. People maintaining such boundaries celebrate their differences as distinctive traits and affirm the place and presence of beauty in their cultural heritage. Simultaneously, outsiders impose external boundaries upon a people, implicitly or explicitly, further reinforcing distinctions.

In conclusion, the principles which underlie and delineate how sign-functions convey meaning within systems and patterns of relationships are derived primarily from everyday features of life. When the appropriate codes are deciphered, these principles reveal cultural myths, messages and themes—the cultural text—which point toward the horizon upon which identity is constructed and boundaries are established. These horizons—sign-functions themselves—act as boundaries, which, by nature, are dynamic.

A Semiotic Analysis of the Current Study

The data derived from the above ethogenic investigation of the *mestizo/a* American community in Southern California was analyzed for the existence of binary opposites, binary parallels and the major generative themes. These themes were then evaluated as a possible means of constructing a community narrative.

The Existence of Binary Opposites

Binary opposites are opposing cultural signs which reflect the inherent tension and paradox within and between cultures and define where one culture begins and the other ends. Significant binary opposites uncovered during the ethogenic investigation, included: (1) the community's relationship to change, concretely manifested as the conflict between respect for and desiring to maintain traditional ways of navigating social relationships contrasted with the necessity of creating leadership roles for women; (2) the community's perspective of a

power differential between the Latino/a community and dominant Anglo society; (3) the use of multiple means of communicating; and (4) the community's welcoming of the immigrant in the midst of a perceived public backlash against immigration.

Binary Opposite: Power Differential: Respondents answered in ways that indicated they experienced a frequent entering and exiting of disparate worlds and multiple ways of being. They expressed concern that the existence of disparate worlds was due to a power differential between their local community and the larger community made up of non-Latinos/as. The binary opposites which support this conclusion include:

- Emphasis on ethnic or racial make-up: Anglo/white contrasted with persons of color.
- Self-identification: The public use of "Hispanic" contrasted with the preference for self-naming using one's country of origin.
- Economic disparity: Concretized as decreased community resources contrasted with the experience of the "outside" community as economically well off.
- Civic participation: An interest in participating in civic projects contrasted with fear of civic authority.
- Civic power: Desire to change one's social reality contrasted with an inability to influence change in the local or surrounding community.

The daily struggle for economic and physical survival has convinced immigrants, in general, that a power differential exists between their communities and the surrounding communities where non Latinos/as live. Respondents pointed to the unprecedented growth in health and wealth as evidence that their communities do not benefit from participation in the economic and social life of the United States. Further evidence of an inequitable distribution of wealth, education and power was revealed by the lack of educational and economic opportunities available to the Latino/a community compared to the many opportunities available to those whom respondents perceived to be in power. This feeling of a power

differential, found to a certain extent in all respondents, is strongest in students and

immigrants. Many students, unable to finance their education beyond high school due to

their immigrant status, have focused their efforts on the reformation of immigration laws.

Significantly, this newfound activism is closely related to the ensuing Binary opposite,

identification with one's country of origin versus identification as "Hispanic."

Binary Opposite: Identification with Country of Origin vs. Identification as

"Hispanic" or "Latino/a": A close identification with one's country of origin was strongly

felt by all respondents, particularly recent immigrants. The data which support this

conclusion include:

- The contrast between naming oneself as "Hispanic" and the identification with one's country of origin.
- The use of Chicano/a, Latino/a, Hispanic vs Costa Rican, Nicaraguan, Mexican, El Salvadoran, Mexican American, etc.
- Being "like-me" contrasted with being different
- The contrasts noticed due to a limited interaction with difference (the surrounding dominant community)

In terms of cultural and ethnic identity, the binary-opposite symbolized by the issue of

self-identification according to one's country of origin or as a "Chicano/a" or "Latino/a"

versus identification as "Hispanic" and "Caucasian" is precisely the issue that pinpoints the

semiotic boundary differentiating "Us" versus "Them." This is especially true since it is the

outsider in possession of political power who imposes the descriptive label "Hispanic" on

members of the community. The term "Hispanic" is problematic even within the

communities surveyed; a large segment of the population surveyed reacted strongly against

the term "Hispanic." Self-identity changed depending on the socio-political context:

Latinos/as of Mexican descent used "Mexicano/a," "Chicano/a," or "Pocho/a" among their

social group but changed the way they self-identify in work or social environments to "Mexican American," "Latino," or "Latina." Immigrants overwhelmingly preferred to identify themselves according to their country of origin. When the term "Hispanic" was used, it was primarily by first and second generation descendants of immigrants from México. It was only rarely, however, the preferred term.

Binary Opposite: Relationship to Change: Those respondents whose daily lives were impacted by the influence of a different, sometimes antagonistic cultural reality, reacted by holding on to their cultural rituals and traditions as a means of survival. The binary opposites which support this conclusion include:

- Conflict between respect for and desiring to maintain cultural traditions vs changing in response to the needs of the current society and environment.
- The contrast between the desire to allow women to lead and difficulty in creating leadership roles for women.
- Relaxed relationships contrasted with more traditional formal relationships.
- Awareness of people, once trusted, who have "held me back"
- Desire to raise children the way they were raised at "home"

Resistance to change and insistence upon adhering to the traditions of "Latino/a" culture was revealed most in immigrants and long-term citizens, especially the third generation descendants of immigrants. These demographic groups represent those respondents whose lives were most impacted by the violent and unequal encounter of cultures. Second generation children of immigrants were the group most likely to attempt to adopt a lifestyle consistent with the dominant culture. This group was also most likely to embrace change as an expected part of life. Notably, recent immigrants, although very interested in learning about the subtle nuances of the American way of life, were the most resistant to incorporating the American way of life into their lifestyle. In spite of the fact that

this group was well aware of the need to adapt to change, they were the least willing to voluntarily give up the rituals and traditions of their culture. Significantly, all respondents expressed the need to maintain a close relationship with their extended family.

The risk a healthy community assumes while surviving as "other" outside the dominant culture ultimately results in a desire for continuity and a resistance to change, especially when that change is perceived as being imposed by an outsider. This resistance is balanced by the realization that change is a part of life; change transforms and re-creates. Re-creation necessitates celebration and ritual in order to sustain itself. Old rituals and traditions are in danger of losing their meaning as elders pass on the task to the younger, more assimilated, members of the group. Passing on the task of maintaining rituals and traditions involves risking a new identity and concurrently assists in the struggle to form a new identity—a new boundary—as those who learn the rituals and traditions learn them in a new way, adding to the already present diversity. The anxiety produced by these many changes resulted in respondents introspectively looking at the needs of the community closest to them, therefore there was a strong focus on the family.

Binary Opposite: Multiple Ways of Communicating: Respondents demonstrated various means of expressing themselves via multiple methods and languages, both verbally and non-verbally. The binary opposites which support this conclusion include:

- The use of Spanish contrasted with the resistance to speak in English.
- Contrasting styles of communication highlighted by the use of storytelling as a distinct method of communication.
- The contrast between using body language as an important part of communication and a preference by the dominant culture for not using body language.

Preference for conversing in Spanish as opposed to English is perceived by many

Americans to be the issue that prevents Latinos/as from being successful participants in today's society. Respondents, however, revealed two other distinct dimensions of the communication divide: the ability of many Latinos/as to communicate with others via the use of body language and the talent for telling stories and creating mythic responses to inquiries. Many respondents related to me that they had been criticized in the past for over-use of their hands during verbal communication. Other respondents remembered that they had been accused of lying because their skill at storytelling allowed them to change certain elements of a message without altering the meaning. Thus, the desire to speak Spanish and a limited proficiency in communicating in English are not the only issues creating misunderstanding between the mainstream Americans and the Latino/a culture. The ability to successfully utilize diverse means of communicating allows even the non-Spanish speaking Latino/a to be understood by the Spanish speaking community.

Binary Parallelism

Binary parallelism refers to the transformation or reversal of what was previously perceived to be a binary opposite.[29] When a binary parallelism is identified, the middle, or new term, represents a shifting of semiotic boundaries and the creation of a new semiotic domain. Binary parallelism occurs whenever a reversal of codes takes place at a given time in a specific culture. Given the proper conditions, a subaltern interpretation of reality is established that allows the community to re-construct and reinterpret their identity. Such a reconstruction of reality can be construed as an example of cultural resilience. The significant binary parallelisms that were disclosed by the local community surveyed, include:

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[29] Alex García-Rivera, St. Martin de Porres: The "Little Stories", 37.

the blending of multiple languages and means of communication, including Spanish and

English; the creation of an empowered activist community from immigrants previously

construed as powerless; and the rejection of the blanket use of "Hispanic" in public.

Binary Opposite: The significance of multiple languages, Spanish and English.

Binary Parallelism: (The Transformation)

- Spanish versus English becoming Spanish contrasted with English, bilingual communication or the use of Spanglish
- Private use of Spanish becoming Bilingual communication in public spaces
- Inability to communicate becoming ability to "communicate" without language

Binary Opposite: Immigration creating a powerless, splintered underclass

Binary Parallelism: (The Transformation)

- Immigrants becoming empowered citizens and activists
- An underground economy that sustains the economic health of the community
- A diverse understanding of the community: cultures accepted within cultures

Binary Opposite: The use of the descriptive phrase "Hispanic" in Public

Binary Parallelism: (The Transformation)

- Self naming according to one's country of origin and ethnic background.
- A younger generation that rejects the use of "Hispanic" in public

Significantly, of the four binary opposites identified, two of them, "multiple means of

communication" and "the importance of country of origin in self-identity," were also

identified as undergoing a transformation and can also be identified as binary parallelisms.

Whereas this transformation was observed in each group of respondents, it was observed to a

greater extent in students, recent immigrants, community activists, educators and to a lesser

extent in first and second generation descendants of immigrants from México. A third binary

opposite, "powerless people becoming politically active," was identified as undergoing

transformation in immigrant communities. Amongst the communities surveyed, only the binary opposite identified as "relationship to change" has not undergone transformation into a binary parallelism.

Summary

The community surveyed can be broken down into the following general categories: students, youth and adult; educators, high school and college; immigrants, citizens and non-citizens; citizens, long-term and short term; and community activists. In general, persons responded in ways that placed them into one of two groups: the recent immigrant or the descendant of immigrants. No significant contrasts were discerned amongst responses given by immigrants from different Latin American countries. Notably, only community activists, regardless of the number of generations removed from their immigrant ancestors, gave responses similar to recent immigrants. The results reveal that the *mestizo/a* American, Latino/a community in the areas surveyed constitutes a diverse community of communities.

Throughout the ethogenic analysis of the community and the subsequent semiotic analysis, the following themes and messages emerged. The themes are sorted by respondent's category.

Amongst All Groups:
- The cultural uniqueness of the people.
- Many-cultural and multi-lingual patterns of communication.
- Community, personal, and family survival.

Recent Immigrants (and Many Non-immigrant Activists):
- A capacity to critique the community that manifests itself in activism.
- Little concern for self-image (also found amongst community activists)
- Focus on economic survival

2nd and 3rd Generation Descendants:
- Cultural uniqueness experienced as a cultural bilocation.

- A self-image that is influenced by multiple factors.
- Desire to maintain fixed patterns of interaction.

The first and most frequently voiced theme was "the cultural uniqueness of the people." People treated as 'other-as-object,' whose lives are objectified, experience their cultural identity as a subjective reality that confirms their perceived differences from dominant society. Naming themselves serves multiple purposes: it affirms a sense of cultural pride, it creates a sense of solidarity with their primary community, and it validates a sense of identity as 'other-as-subject.' The conviction with which the entire community surveyed voiced this theme, particularly the immigrant community, indicates that this is a substantial boundary that resonates with the energy of a people experiencing considerable change.

While positive in scope, the community also revealed that cultural uniqueness has its downside. Related to its understanding of uniqueness, the community revealed that it carries within itself a sense of marginalization. For many respondents—especially the children of immigrants and their second and third generation descendants—marginalization was experienced as a cultural bi-location. This bi-location was concretized in the daily life of the respondents by the need to utilize styles of interaction and communication perceived to be many-cultural and multi-lingual. Furthermore, this sense of bi-location frequently generated a negative self-identity, especially in the children of immigrants. Thus, the understanding amongst this group that self-image is influenced by multiple factors. The necessity for community, personal, and family survival emerged as a function of cultural resilience. The necessity of survival may also account for the expressed desire to maintain unchanging patterns of relationships. This theme consistently emerged amongst families that yearned to maintain fixed patterns of interaction. Surprisingly, this theme was detected in all groups,

including recent immigrants and their second and third generation children. Finally, a capacity to critique the community, displayed by community activism, was observed in most groups, especially first generation immigrants.

The generative themes expressed by the respondents disclose numerous complex messages about the community surveyed. It is a community within which there are people who react negatively to **change** and respond in ways that seek to maintain **order**. Various members of the community are concerned with acting as advocates for the community and desire **connection** with the surrounding local community while simultaneously focusing on **maintaining** their traditional cultural ties. In the second and third generation children of immigrants, the unique **cultural identity** and **social location** of the community fosters a desire to seek a unique name derived from their primary country of origin; simultaneously, their public identity frequently conforms to the powerful **dominant community**. These three motifs—connection versus maintenance, cultural identity/self-naming versus the power of the dominant community to control, and change versus order—reveal the semiotic boundaries of the community; hence, the position from which to construct story of the community.

The three semiotic boundaries—opposites which point to the inherent tension and paradox between cultures and define where one culture begins and the other end—resonate with the pulse of a community undergoing dramatic changes. These changes are exemplified by the existence of binary parallels. Only the border created by the relationship between change and order has not yet undergone a transformation or reinterpretation by the community. Perhaps this is because those whose daily lives are impacted by the influence of a different, changing culture, behave in ways that enable them to preserve their traditions as a

means of survival. The risk a healthy community assumes while surviving outside the dominant culture, as 'other-as-object,'ultimately results in a demand for order and a resistance to change; especially when that change is perceived as being imposed by outsiders. The majority of the people surveyed, however, having been raised in a context of oppression, are aware of the implications of sealing the boundaries of the community from within. For this reason they are open to others, albeit wary of the unknown.

In a sense, the horizon upon which a Latino/a identity is located is open from the inside—within the context of continuity, any and all are encouraged to partake in the life of the community. Thus, resistance to change is balanced by the realization that change is a necessary part of life; change transforms and re-creates. This leads to a second pair of binary opposites, cultural identity vs the dominant culture, now transformed as binary parallels. Re-creation necessitates connection in order to sustain itself, connection with others who are within and without the community. This connection, by definition, involves the risk one takes when constructing a new identity and concurrently assists in the formation of a new identity—a new boundary—as those who act in solidarity with the community add to the already present diversity. The anxiety produced by the shifting boundaries that occur while forming these new connections results in an instinctive reaction to maintain continuity within one's own community. Hence, there emerges a focus on the community in our midst, our own local community and family. This focus is revealed by the importance "cultural identity" and "naming of oneself" assumes in the community. Although self-identity is an issue the local Latino/a community has debated for generations, recent immigrants have provoked the community to assume an activist posture. This current stance indicates that a

semiotic border, an identity, has been assaulted. The consequence of this assault, unknown at the time, may simply result in the empowerment of the community. In time, this new border will be assaulted as a dynamic community continues the process of adapting to a different way of life.

This chapter investigated the modern day experience of the local *mestizo/a* American community in Southern California. Interviews, dialogues, and observations of the community provided the data; an ethogenic analysis and a semiotic reading of culture provided the analysis and interpretation of the data. The cultural data reveals a community whose world-view is different from that of the dominant culture. Chapter 2 provides reasons why these conclusions support the creation of alternative methods of education for the Chicano/a.

CHAPTER 2

The Multiple Identities of the Latino/a in the Southwest

Data analyzed in Chapter 1 indicates that the reality experienced by Latinos/as in the communities surveyed differs from the reality experienced by persons living in mainstream American communities. I propose that the landscape upon which Chicanos/as, specifically the descendants of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica, paint their dreams of this world is fashioned after the standards created by their indigenous, Spanish and African ancestors. This blend of social constructs, the end result of years of historical and anthropological influences, creates a unique, albeit divergent, way of perceiving both the physical and the spiritual worlds. In the United States, after the European conquest of the Americas, every attempt was made to prevent the mixing of the indigenous native with the "pure blooded" European. México, on the other hand, mixed conquered and conqueror at every level of society. Thus, México evolved into one of the few *mestizo* and pluralistic societies in the hemisphere. This suggests that the unique world-view of the *mestizo/a* American had its origins outside of popular American culture. It also suggests that the cultural lens with which the *mestizo/a* views the world reflects a more indigenous perspective than that of the non-*mestizo*.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that it is an indigenous cultural framework that allows the *mestizo/a* to navigate the world. Here, I will further the analysis done in Chapter 1 by examining the historical record and integrating it with the cultural data extrapolated from Chapter 1. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 provide an analysis of the reality experienced by Mexican Americans and other groups of Latinos/as living in Southern California. What

emerges are the epistemological roots of the local community of *mestizo/a* Americans—roots that suggest that the community socially constructs their interpretation of the world utilizing an indigenous framework.

Educators now acknowledge that Latinos/as are generally kinesthetic and visual, preferring a peer-oriented learning environment with a high degree of structure. In addition to their preference for different learning styles, Latinos/as utilize multiple ways of communicating, employ a more pluralistic world view and place more emphasis on family relationships. Latino/a adolescents are more likely than non-Latinos/as to adopt their parent's lifestyles and commitment to religious beliefs. Furthermore, due to the central role given the family, Latino/a children are more likely to drop out of school to assist their families financially; in fact many become the primary source of income. Many of these deeply rooted values, including the community oriented, other-directed family-based system, are in direct conflict with the individualism valued by popular American culture.

Of the many factors influencing the construction of *mestizo/a* Amerindian identity, hence the factors that must be considered in constructing pedagogy more specific to the community, the most significant are derived from indigenous roots. They are (1) the orality of our ancestors, which explains the use of multiple ways of communicating; (2) bi-location, or the sense of separation felt between the public and private life; (3) a reliance upon folk religiosity and folk wisdom; (4) a strong devotion to family and community; and (5) a well-developed sense of place that influences patterns of migration and immigration. Each of these represents an avenue of entry into the Chicano/a culture, a means of establishing a dialogue with the community for the purpose of beginning the process of education. In order

to further delineate the unique epistemology of the Latino/a learner, I will explore in this chapter (1) the oral roots of the culture, (2) the sense of bi-location experienced by the recent immigrant and their children who travel on a daily basis between public and private worlds, (3) the atmosphere that encourages folk religiosity and folk wisdom to flourish within the culture, including the role syncretism plays in forming a parallel belief system, and (4) the role of immigration in the construction of a community identity. The dynamics that contribute to a family and a community ethic will be explored in Chapter 4 as part of the discussion of the *Mexica* cosmology.

Communication: An Oral Culture

The roots of Mexican culture, found both in pre-Columbian and post-conquest experiences, are characterized by orality. Although the *Mexica*, as did many of the *Nahuatl* speaking people, employed a limited alphabet for representing phonetic signs, much of their written communication and legal records made use of pictographic and ideographic glyphs.[1] Inasmuch as these glyphs were subject to multiple interpretations and meanings, it was imperative that the correct ideas and messages denoted by the ideographs and pictographs be taught. The *Mexica* priests and *tlamatinime*—the old, wise ones—devoted a great deal of time to instilling in the young the meaning of the glyphs. Much of the knowledge was imparted—via song, dance and poetry—during social rites and rituals; however, learning to

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[1] León-Portilla, Aztec Image of Self and Society, 45-55. As is standard in oral cultures, pictorial writing remained perceptually bound to the visible forms of the surrounding environment. In oral cultures, and even to a partially literate society like the *Mexica*, "human events take on meaning only to the extent that they can be located within a storied universe that continually retells itself." David Abram, The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World (New York: Pantheon Books, 1996), 187.

read and understand the glyphs also became part of the standard curriculum in the schools. In these ways, communication of the deepest meanings and traditions of the *Nahuatl* speaking people, even though written, were transmitted orally. Indeed, much of the language, history and knowledge of the indigenous peoples of México was orally transmitted. For this reason, rhetorical speech was considered sacred; it was mastered in the schools and utilized during ceremonies and rituals.

Walter Ong, in his work Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word, identifies literate cultures—where people utilize an alphabet to read and write—and primal cultures—where people either do not utilize an acknowledged alphabet or utilize a pictographic means of communicating.[2] Ong further describes contemporary cultures that retain vestiges of orality—cultures he refers to as residually oral—where the members of the group or community are descendants of a primary oral culture. Ong describes secondarily oral communities as those where members belong to a literate society but prefer an oral means of communication. Ong identifies modern first world countries as literate, Native American cultures as residually oral and adolescents in the U.S. as secondarily oral. According to Ong's classification, the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica constituted a primary oral society and their descendants constitute a residually oral society.

Knowledge in oral and residually oral societies, derived from the collective memory, was considered part of the public domain and was transmitted as a means of carrying on the tradition and lifestyle of the group. Knowledge was never the exclusive property of the few

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[2] Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London: Routledge, 1982). See chap. 3, "Some Psychodynamics of Orality."

who were able to recall it, control it, and use it for their own specialized interests. It could not be withheld or used to manipulate persons or gods; nor could it ever be owned or controlled for the sake of an individual or cause. Rather, knowledge, like memory, was thought to be part of the cosmos, less an object to be owned, always more subjective than objective, and meaningless unless communicated personally from one human "interior" to another human "interior." Thus, it was always a function of the community, a part of the collective memory. As collective memory, it conveyed the wisdom of the community. In ancient México, wisdom was transmitted through a well-developed system of rhetoric and communicated in the form of stories, legends and myths.

In the *Mexica* world, it was believed that the sacred words spoken by the ancestors through the stories, legends and myths, set forth the proper behavior and moral codes. Functionally, moral codes were in place to replicate the established patterns of history and to link present actions with behavior inherited from the past.[3] The ability to control the meaning of the written and spoken word and to imbue it with an inherent symbolic force, allowed the elders and the *tlamatinime* to relegate history to a sacred and unifying place in the life of the community. Repeating the stories of the ancestors, served "to bind the human community to the ceaseless round dance of the cosmos."[4] It also served to exert social control over society,

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[3] See Burkhardt, <u>Slippery Earth</u>, 12.

[4] Abram, 186. The telling of stories and transmitting of history allows people to actively participate in a creative process that occurs in the present. In oral cultures, history becomes an active, creative process: "an ongoing emergence whose periodic renewal actually *requires* such participation," Abram, 186. Abram responds to Ong and develops theories in the direction of an environmental ethic. While not refuting Ong, he demonstrates how oral communication is a function of humanity's relationship to the earth. Human communication is a type of birdsong, a form of resonance with the world. In Abram's analysis, prior to the development of writing, the birds contributed to human identity and the winds offered up praises to the creator. Abram believes humanity has lost this inextricable link with the cosmos.

especially the youth.

In oral societies, the internal and eternal truths communicated by a story were more important than the facts contained therein. In Mesoamerica, a story was able to change to fit the needs and truths of the present time. In other words, the story was transmitted for the sake of the message conveyed and not as a means of conveying scientific truth in the western sense. Sometimes summarized as sayings or *dichos*, stories were used by the elders to indoctrinate the young into the moral and ethical standards of the community. Education in oral societies consisted of memorization of the community history, legend and tale. Through the art of a well-established system of rhetoric and debate, students learned detailed answers to all the questions of life. In these societies respect and a place of honor was granted the priest, shaman or wise-one to whom the responsibility for carrying on the tradition was given.

Oral consciousness tended to be linked to a high degree of tradition and community solidarity. Because knowledge was collective in oral societies, there was no concept allowing for an individual to own knowledge or keep it for oneself; therefore, individualism was difficult to sustain. The community retained importance and was the source of knowledge, life and sustenance. Perceiving a world where everything and everybody was intrinsically connected, emphasized relationships with little or no room for individualism. In this way persons were identified with and were given their identity in relationship to the family or group. Categories of family were numerous and extended like branches on a tree. Blood relationships were primary, but became secondary to other types of community based or socially based relationships. In the traditional Mexican world, the system of *compradrismo* denotes bonds that are as strong as, if not stronger, than blood ties.

In contrast to literate or alphabetic cultures, Ong points out that oral cultures tend to be: (1) **Additive** rather than subordinative: information is remembered best by adding new knowledge to what is already or previously known; in oral cultures, stories are created in small chunks or pieces that are added to the big story—in this way history and story retain their life; the repetitive use of "and" indicates that a story is in process; (2) **Aggregative** rather than analytic: ideas and thoughts are intact and circular, rather than separate and linear; (3) **Redundant** or copious: the world is perceived in nonlinear ways and people have a propensity to think in terms of cycles and relationships between cycles; many oral cultures have a cyclical view of time and perceive the space-time continuum as a cycle that continually recurs; (4) **Conservationist** or traditionalist: the focus is on remembering the past, even as the present takes priority; (5) **Agonistically** toned: struggle defines relationships and achievement of knowledge; in such a climate relationships may appear to outsiders to be cruel and harsh, yet, persons possess the ability to heap praise on one another when indicated; (6) **Close to the human** life-world: facts and ideas are connected to daily activity—there is an emphasis on function rather than abstraction; answers to questions are given with respect to the functional use of an object;[5] (7) **Empathetic** and participatory rather than objectively distanced; (8) **Homeostatic**: giving up memories which have no present relevance because the past is subordinate to the present; (9) **Situational** rather than abstract: objects are defined by their relationship or function. In addition, oral cultures are oriented to the present—in these communities, history exists for the sake of or to validate the present condition.

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[5] For example, when children from a residually oral culture are asked today to identify a circle, the answer will reflect a functional or known use: "it's a plate," or "it's like the moon."

Each of these characteristics suggest a people and a community whose social constructs, cognitive structures, and epistemology are different from those of a predominantly literate or alphabetic society. Socially, subjective interaction takes precedence over objective knowledge; communication, therefore, is considered significant first with another human subject rather than another object. And, because the spoken word has power—the power to name the world—verbal communication is first and foremost a means of identification, a means of social structuring and a method of including oneself in the community story. Cognitively, humans in an oral society utilize different structures in the development of language and communication. Sound, for instance, in an oral society becomes more important and an aural understanding of the world becomes a significant factor in daily survival. Because sound is not timeless—that is, once said or heard a sound disappears—the speech and hearing act are intricately related. This results in a relationship not strictly bound to time, but also a relationship also bound to place. Likewise, in oral or residually oral societies, signs take on a multitude of meanings and are perceived in different ways. In this respect oral communities develop a highly symbolic means of communication and are oriented toward a more mytho-poietic understanding of life.[6]

Because they are bound to place, religious and spiritual development in oral cultures takes the form of a developing relationship with the earth. It is common in primary and residually oral cultures that this understanding of one's place in the cosmos influences one's

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[6] *Mestizo* cultures have been described as cultures of "verbal as well as of literary expression, cultures of poets and storytellers and, ultimately, cultures whose deepest layers of humanity, whose most intimate 'soul' can only be described by the poet." Sixto J. García, "Sources and Loci of Hispanic Theology," 39.

responsibility toward the earth. The earth is considered to be alive and a part of the living and breathing community. Often, portions of the earth are given human qualities or functions. In some cases this earth ethic it takes the form of a cosmic responsibility aimed at preserving the universe via sacrifice or offering;[7] this responsibility is carried over into almost every category of life. For the *Mexica*, who developed great centers of learning and education for young people, responsibility was taught in their schools. It was in the public schools that youth were taught ethical and moral behavior, the traditions of their culture and to engage in public discourse. Guidelines for moral and ethical behavior were based upon a proper relationship with the cosmos. Moral actions were those that maintained cosmic balance and did not offend the surrounding world. In oral societies it was considered blasphemous to tell a lie—it was unthinkable to speak an untruth in the face of the sun or the moon. The school system reflected this ethos and developed into an institution with very rigid rules; rules that demanded personal discipline and sacrifice for the purpose of teaching responsibility toward the community and the cosmos.

The oral orientation toward knowledge and understanding of the world changed with the advent of the alphabet; where knowledge once required the presence of an immediate human subject, humans now acquired the ability to communicate without reference to another subject. It became possible to pass on knowledge from a knower to a learner in a nonhuman, non-subjective, impersonal way. When this occurred, knowledge became rigid and codified. For example, when the *Mexica* creation stories were put into writing by Sahagún, they

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[7] In Mayan and *Mexica* societies the priests offered sacrifices to ensure the rising and setting of the sun. Every 52 years the *Nahuatl* priests were called on to convince the cosmos to renew itself and grant another cycle. Continuation of the world suggested that no great moral or ethical crises had taken place.

became eternally unchangeable. Prior to this, whenever the creation stories and rituals were related they were adapted to the audience or person. The story could change over and over, and still be the same. Once the primaeval creation and migration stories became codified there was a tendency for them to become mere objective knowledge, knowledge that more "learned persons" were able to validate or refute. As a result of this codification, the art of rhetoric and storytelling began to lose its unifying place in the hearts and minds of the people. Those priests and teachers not killed in the conquest of México, whose understanding of the world was based upon their knowledge of the "old ways," were driven underground or ignored. In time, the art of communicating via storytelling, once a powerful tool for exerting social control, was relegated to the private and more spiritually oriented realms of life.

In the modern world, story telling and oral communication are not a prerequisite to success. Yet, for *mestizos/as*, story telling, rhetoric and oral communication are a natural part of the cultural substrata. Schools and curriculum that utilize these strengths will be more accessible to the Latino/a learner.

The Roots of Bi-location: Separation and *Rechazo*

The day-to-day reality that contributes to an understanding of cultural identity as bi-located is another characteristic common to *mestizos/as* in Southern California. Virgilio Elizondo arranges the history of the Mexican and Mexican American people into what he describes as periods of separation, rejection, and cultural conflict—of *rechazo*. Elizondo emphasizes the sixteenth century conquest of México as the starting point for the roots of Chicano history. It was then that two cultures, two world views, and two separate and unequal world powers—the indigenous and the European—merged violently. The first

rechazo occurred after the Spanish conquest in 1521—this marked the beginning of the

mestizo/a. The second experience of *rechazo* began when the United States and México

collided in the nineteenth century and struggled for the same land and territory in the

Southwestern United States—this was the first experience of the borderland. The third

rechazo continues today with the sometimes painful interaction of second, third and fourth

generation children of Mexican immigrants with popular American culture.

I prefer to delve further, however, and locate both the roots of Chicano/a history and

the first experience of *rechazo* in the early patterns of migration that took place over a

thousand years ago. Reaching back into the ancestral past takes into consideration the

primordial *rechazo*, the sense of separation that occurred when our earliest ancestors departed

from their homeland—the mythical land named *Aztlán,* from whence the *Mexica* and all

descendants of the ancient *Nahuatl* speaking people claim to originate—and headed for a new

home promised by their tribal deity, *Huitzilopochtli* (hummingbird on the left).[8]

Huitzilopochtli, who is consistently linked with the warrior eagle, led the *Chichimeca* and the

Mexica in a southward direction in search of a new homeland, hence he was referred to as

"left handed" or to the south.[9]

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[8] See Doris Heyden, trans., The History of the Indies of New Spain, by Diego Durán, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 10. The *Mexica* are often inaccurately referred to as the *Aztecs* because they claim to originate from *Aztlán.* The contemporary significance of *Aztlan* as a Chicano/a homeland is highlighted in Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco Lomeli, eds., Aztlan: Essays on the Chicano Homeland (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

[9] When oriented to the west–the location of the setting sun–the south is to the left. In their southward migration, the *Mexica* were returning to the birthplace of *Huitzilopochtli*. See Roberta H. Markman and Peter T. Markman, The Flayed God: The Mesoamerican Mythological Tradition (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 380. *Huitzilopochtli* also refers to the sun. "En la concepción cósmica del antiguo mexicano el dios quedaba al Sur, que es la izquierda del mundo, ya que camino del sol es Oriente a Poniente," Angel María K.Garibay, Historia de la Literatura Náhuatl, vol. 2 (México City:

In the early morning light of a day thousands of years ago, our forebears set out from *Aztlán*, a region of deserts, mountains, rivers, and forests, to seek a new home. Where they came from originally is hidden in the sands and riverbeds and only hinted at by the cast of eye and skin which we, their children, now bear. Driven by drought, or enemies, or by the vision of a new motherland, our people began walking toward the south in the hope of founding a new world. Among the earliest of our ancestors were the *Nahúas*, from whom sprang the most advanced and sophisticated peoples of the North American continent.[10]

For thousands of years the land that is today considered the Southwest United States was inhabited by indigenous peoples who lived and traveled throughout the area. The *Mexica* made their wandering journey from there to *Anáhuac*, the region of the Valley of México, with numerous stops along the way. During their journey over mountains and through deserts a philosophy and way of life evolved which their gods shaped and which the *Toltecas*, the *Chichimecas*, and the *Mexica*—the major groups migrating from North to South—nurtured over the centuries. Among the earliest groups to leave the area were the Uto-Aztecan speaking tribes that eventually would comprise the people known as the *Opata* of *Sonora*, the *Tarahumara* of *Durango*, the *Huichol* of *Jalisco* and *Nayarit* and the *Nahuatl* speaking people of the central plains of México. Experts disagree as to the exact origination of these peoples. It has been placed as far north as the four corners area of northern New Mexico and Arizona or the great lakes of Utah. While a large body of evidence suggests that the mythical homeland of *Aztlán* is on the Pacific coast of *Nayarit*, approximately 450 miles north west of México City-*Tenochtitlán*, many linguists suggest that the Paiute, Shoshoni, Hopi and Tubatulabal who live in Arizona and New Mexico speak a language similar to the

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Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1954), 404.

[10] Rendon, 7. This story, or stories like it, was passed on from one generations to the next.

classic *Nahuatl* spoken in the central plains of México.[11]

Placing the earliest *rechazo* at the time of the primordial migration explains the sense of connection many persons in the community feel with *Aztlan*, the land and place of the southwest. It also accounts for the continued migration to and from the area by modern day descendants of the ancient Mesoamerican people.

Early Emigration

> We did not come here. We were not brought here. It is not a question of letting us go. We've already done our wandering all over *Aztlán* without feeling that we are part of *Aztlán* and we have no intention of leaving. We are the only people in the United States, with the [Native Amerindian], who continue surviving within the Unites States as an autonomous people under treaty.[12]

Emergence legends are numerous, and most of them relate a story of seven tribes—all descendants of or related to the *Chichimeca*—who simultaneously departed *Aztlán* and settled for many years in *Chicomoztoc,* the place of the seven caves. While settled there they planted and harvested and built a temple to their tribal deity. Emigration from this site was sporadic with separate groups leaving at various times until eventually the entire settlement disappeared. According to one tradition, the *Tolteca* were the first to depart and the *Mexica* were the last. Although Diego Durán places the initial departure from *Aztlán* in the year 820,

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[11] According to Lyle Campbell's <u>American Indian Languages</u>, *Nahuatl* is a subgroup of the Uto-Aztecan language family, which also includes: Pochutec, Pipil, and the modern dialects of *Nahuatl*. The following families of languages indigenous to México belong to the Uto-Aztecan stock: *Corachol* family [*Cora* and *Huichol*], *Nahuatl* (*Aztecan*) family [*Nahuatl*], *Tepiman* family, [*O'odham* (Papago), *Tepehuan* and Pima Bajo (*Névome*)], *Taracahitic* family [*Huarijio, Mayo, Tarahumara* and *Yaqui*]. The northern most Uto-Aztecan language, Northern Paiute, is found as far north as Oregon and Idaho. In the south, members of the *Nahuatl* speaking family are spoken as far south as Nicaragua and El Salvador.

[12] Interview with Ricardo Sanchez, in Andrés G. Guerrero, <u>A Chicano Theology</u> (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 80. The Treaty of *Guadalupe Hidalgo*, signed in 1848, guaranteed Mexicans caught behind the line, the right to retain their culture, language, religion, property, and civil rights.

the historical evidence indicates that these peregrinations commenced as long as 2000 years ago.[13]

Mexica legend maintains that the departure from *Chicomoztoc* and all subsequent journeys were directed by *Huitzilopochtli*, manifest as the sun and the warrior eagle, and his sister *Malinal Xochtil*, manifest as the moon. A significant turning point occurred when *Huitzilopochtli* determined that *Malinal Xochtil* was an evil sorceress and abandoned her at *Malinalco*. Following a fierce battle that ended with the victory of *Huitzilopochtli*, the *Mexica* separated themselves from the remaining groups of travelers. They eventually arrived in the Valley of México and quickly sought to integrate themselves into the life of the established communities. Rejected and persecuted by the people of the valley, they moved on. Weary from travel, they discovered shallow marshes by a large lake and there in the marsh waters saw a sign—an eagle grasping a serpent in its claws as it perched upon a *nopal* cactus sprouting from a rock.[14] It was this symbol, revealed as a sign from *Huitzilopochtli*, that indicated to the *Mexica* that this was the end of their journey. In the year 1325 the *Mexica* founded the city of *Tenochtitlán*. From that day forward the city was considered the center of the world; all directions, all coordinates remained relative to the *Templo Mayor* at *Tenochtitlán*.

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[13] Durán, 12 (trans. by Heyden). The events realistically occurred between 1000 to 1500 years ago. Tula, capital city of the *Tolteca* reached its height c. 900-1050. This was the age of *Mixcoatl* and *Ce Acatl Topiltizin Quetzalcoatl*. This first wave of *Tolteca* dominance was recorded in the *Mexica* codices and the Maya *Popul Vuh*. A second Toltec empire, the *Tolteca-Chichimeca*, was born about 1100-1200. It was around this time that the people who were to call themselves *Mexica* begin their migrations south toward the Valley of México in the wake of the *Chichimec* invasions.

[14] *Tenochtitlán* is derived from *tenochtli*, or red, hard prickly pear. The "*te-*" of *Tenochtitlán* is "*tetl*" or stone. Hard fruits added the prefix "*te(-tl)*" as a compound element to indicate hardness. The suffix "*-tlan*" denotes below or at the base.

Emigration Patterns and *Rechazo* after the Conquest

The European conquest of North America had divergent effects on the migration patterns of the indigenous inhabitants of the continent. Throughout the Americas the indigenous peoples were physically exterminated or colonized by "pure-blooded" Europeans who retain power to the present day. The effects on migration were predictable. To escape physical extermination, indigenous peoples from the Eastern United States migrated west and south. To escape cultural extermination, indigenous peoples from México migrated north. Populations from both areas encountered each other in what is today northern México and the Southwestern United States. Descendants of this post-conquest migration continue to live in this region—they consider this geographically continuous area to be one. In their minds, the idea of an arbitrary border splitting ones homeland into two countries is an unnatural phenomenon. Even today some immigrants consider both sides their home and have trouble understanding the border.

> For many years the Mexicans have made their own state in the United States. The people go, some return, and then others go. Then when they return, others go. That's how we go. That's how we go back, back and forth.[15]

From this perspective, a dual understanding of place and home contributes to an identity both flexible and multiple; unfortunately it also contributes to a sense of *rechazo* and alienation.

A Multiple Identity

Another factor that contributes to a sense of *rechazo* in many *mestizos/as is* the perceived separation between public life and private life. This is the feeling that one's life is

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[15] Marilyn P. Davis, <u>Mexican Voices / American Dreams: An Oral History of Mexican Immigration to the United States</u> (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1990), 29.

bi-located—split between two or more worlds with the existence of multiple boundaries and multiple identities. Most *mestizos/as* acknowledge that they live within many mutually exclusive worlds: the most obvious as a member of the dominant culture and as a member of *la raza.* By definition, our *mestizo/a* ancestry is both Spanish, indigenous and African. Historically we are both oppressor, Spanish, and oppressed, indigenous. Racially, we are white (Spanish), red (native American) and black (African.) On the one hand we are the people of *Aztlán,* true descendants of the Fifth Sun, *el Quinto Sol.*

> On the other hand we live in a gringo society,
> > but our culture is Mexican.
> We have a gringo impulse (learned from the gringo),
> > but our *corazón* is Latino.
> We relate to the impoverished world because of our history of oppression,
> > but we live in a technological, industrial, affluent world.
> We embrace two world views in our reality,
> > the European and the indigenous.
> We practice *machismo,*
> > yet our Mexican heritage is woman-centered.
> Our fathers are the heads of the households,
> > but our mothers are the hearts of it.
> Some of us feel superior because we are white;
> > some of us feel inferior because we are brown or red.
> The European in us is individually inclined;
> > the indigenous in us is communally inclined.
> The Protestant in us is competitive,
> > but the folk religion teaches us to be social.
> As Protestants we have ecclesiastical leadership
> > but lack social awareness;
> as Catholics we have a social consciousness,
> > but little ecclesiastical leadership.
> The Jewish in us is exclusivistic;
> > the Christian-Israelite in us is inclusivistic.[16]

Of all the themes unearthed in the stories told by the respondents surveyed in Chapter

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[16] Adapted from Guerrero, 17ff.

1, the notion of bi-location or a multiple identity generated the strongest feeling. Overall, those persons who lived during the early part of the twentieth century experienced an overt racism that dominated their lives and limited their life choices. The vast majority of elderly, U.S. born respondents, at one time in their lives, lived in small mining towns in Arizona and New Mexico. There, the mining companies segregated the Mexican and Anglo workers into virtually separate communities; a separation which made it easier for the companies to practice their discriminatory policies while fostering social divisions among their workers.[17] Librado "Chapo" Lopez Licon, born in 1899, recalls being sent away from home at the age of five, "because [in Arizona] there were no schools for us Mexicans." The atmosphere in the mining towns of Arizona and New Mexico at the turn of the century was one that viewed the Mexican population equal to animals.[18] In such a climate the demarcation between the two worlds was easily discernible. Here, a double identity meant knowing ones place and following the rules in public while practicing ones culture at home.

As these persons matured and migrated to California, the stories they told indicated that their response to the cultural and environmental change was varied. Some, either because they were too dark to fit in or too proud to give in, settled in communities with strong cultural, religious, and social ties. Others assumed a new identity, changed their

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[17] Mario Barrera, Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 48. Early twentieth century hiring practices limited the Mexican population in the Southwest to jobs in the mining, agriculture and service industries. Very few were allowed to enter a profession.

[18] A. Blake Brophy, Foundlings on the Frontier: Racial and Religious Conflict in Arizona Territory, 1904-1905 (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1972). Brophy describes the violent confrontation between cultures that took place in Morenci and Clifton when white orphans from a New York Catholic orphanage were brought into these mining towns and placed in Mexican families. These are the two towns in which my maternal grandfather and grandmothers families lived and worked.

names and became part of the dominant culture. Because many of them were told by society, "never say you're Mexican, they're dirty," assimilation and acculturation were the primary means of adaptation during this period. This method of adaptation is described by Octavio Ignacio Romano as the response pattern of "Anglo-Saxon conformity."[19] Romano observed four possible survival mechanisms amongst second and third generation children of immigrants from México. The first, the "Anglo-Saxon conformity" model, describes those who, by assimilating, abandoned "virtually all identity with their cultural past, no longer spoke Spanish" and may have changed their names. Romano described the second group as those who reflect a "Stabilized Differences" approach to relating to a new culture. These are immigrants who found pockets of like-minded people—who may have originated from the same city or state in México—and who attempted to maintain a way of life similar to their lives in México. Survival meant living a life outside the mainstream culture. Children born into these communities were raised in what was described as "the warm matrix of a loving community." Yet because these communities were isolated, they fostered unreal expectations of life on the outside. Ultimately there was a culture shock when contact was made with "the outside." Respondents who at one time lived in such communities made statements such as, "I was embarrassed, angry, and frustrated when I became aware of the differences between the real world and the world where I was raised." Embraced and nurtured at home they were considered outsiders in the "real world." The third model describes immigrants who adapted by founding and belonging to parallel organizations which mimic the new dominant culture,

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[19] Octavio Ignacio Romano, "The Historical and Intellectual Presence of Mexican-Americans," El Grito, 2 (Winter 1969): 32-46.

a practice referred to as "Realigned Pluralism." By imitating the world around them, these first and second generation Mexican Americans attempted to become *like* popular American society rather than part of it. It is in this category that we see the phenomena of a "third generation return" or a re-identification by third generation children with their culture of origin. This phenomena was likely to result in confusion amongst the parents of these children, a confusion that commonly precipitated tension and distrust between the generations. Many respondents criticized their parents for "selling out." In the fourth, and least common category, Romano describes those immigrants who were able to maintain a "Biculturalism." This category describes the immigrant who successfully migrated back and forth between two worlds, crossing borders daily for the purpose of physical and psychological survival.

The four response patterns reflect the many ways in which a significant number of immigrants adapt to the reality of multiple worlds. These categories are therefore useful for understanding personal and community survival as well as for understanding the need for maintaining a presence in one's social environment. Significantly, only the Anglo-Saxon conformity model, commonly referred to as assimilation, required the immigrant or his/her children to adopt a single identity; the other three models allow for a dual or multiple identity.

Constructing a Multiple or "Many" Identity

In the 1960s and 70s a generation of bicultural activists and third generation children of those who practiced a realigned parallelism forced the larger community to choose between assimilation and pride in a cultural identity. Leaders rose up who spoke out against

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an inherently racist society and focused the community on the plight of the impoverished and

oppressed. *"Soy orgulloso de mi raza"* was their cry and their challenge. They realized that

"if the U.S. was the land of opportunity and development, México was the land of ancient

civilizations, sophisticated culture, and beautiful customs and traditions. The U.S. had a great

future; México had a great past."[20] It was during this time that many Chicanos/as realized the

significance of their bicultural multiple identity and embraced it. They acknowledged that as

mestizos/as they lived within many mutually exclusive worlds.

Virgilio Elizondo suggests that *mestizaje*—the generation of a new people from two

disparate parent peoples—is the proper descriptive metaphor to use for this "dual identity."

He believes that this dual identity allows each new *mestizo/a* to form a bridge across the two

disparate cultures. In this construct, the bridge allows the *mestizo/a* to successfully travel in

and out of either culture. Pat Mora and Gloria Anzaldúa allude to *mestizaje* in their phrase,

borrowed from the *Nahuatl* speaking people—living *nepantla*[21] To live *nepantla* indicates

that a person is in the middle, on that slippery slope moving from "one class, race, gender

position to another . . . from the present identity into a new identity."[22] Both terms, *mestizaje*

or *nepantla*, offer a descriptive way of emphasizing the unique position of *mestizos/as* as

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[20] Elizondo, Future is Mestizo, 19.

[21] Pat Mora and Gloria Anzaldúa borrowed *nepantla* from the *Nahuatl*—living in the "in between state" or on the spiritual boundary (locus of the spirits) between two worlds. Gloria Anzaldua compares this state of *nepantla* to the status and role of Chicanas in modern day U.S. society. Pat Mora, Nepantla: Essays from the Land in the Middle (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); and Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation Books, 1990).

[22] Gloria Anzaldúa, "Chicana Artists: Exploring Nepantla, El Lugar de la Frontera" in The Latino Studies Reader: Culture, Economy, and Society, ed. Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 165.

those people who experience the fluid reality of two sometimes contradictory worlds in their daily lives. Furthermore, *nepantla* allows for the possibility of a triple or multiple identity. Both terms are lacking, however, in that neither fully responds to the pluralistic agenda advocated by modern day proponents of multiculturalism and pluralism. William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor have questioned the benefits of pluralism and find liberal multiculturalism to be lacking. Their concern is that, "pluralism endorses the dominant culture as normative."[23] Likewise, Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash reject the ideology of multiculturalism because they believe it imposes upon grassroots cultures the universal good of a single global society where western concepts of "human rights" and the "right to education" become the norm for all communities.[24] I suggest that liberal multiculturalism is another attempt at imposing a universalist construct on non-majority cultures. By highlighting the relationship of marginalized cultures to the dominant American culture, the multicultural ideology merely emphasizes the centrality of the dominant culture. A more valid concept is conveyed by the term "many-culture." This phrase indicates that no one culture dominates and that all are central. Moreover, neither multiculturalism nor the descriptive phrases *nepantla* and *mestijaje* explicitly acknowledge the despair generated by the constant struggle to maintain a cultural identity—a personal equilibrium—in the midst of the violent and unequal encounter of the dominant and subaltern cultures. Yet this is the reality experienced on a day-to-day basis as a fact of life by those living between two worlds.

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[23] William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor, "Constructing Cultural Citizenship," in <u>Latino Cultural Citizenship</u>, eds. Flores and Benmayor, 9.

[24] Esteva and Prakash, <u>Grassroots Post-Modernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures</u> (London: Zed Books, 1998); and Prakash and Esteva, <u>Escaping Education</u>.

The stress generated by the struggle to maintain a cultural identity, ironically, is not as noticeable in the newly arrived immigrant as it is in children whose parents utilized the "Stabilized Differences" or "Realigned Pluralism" models of survival as a means of adapting to popular American culture. These particular children—those whose epistemological framework and cognitive structures reflect a framework derived from their parent's country of origin—experience significant social alienation associated with ethno-stress. Problems of abuse, materialism, identification with the dominant culture, belief in the myths of the dominant culture, a poor self-image and a decreased self worth, are the results of ethno-stress. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, educators must utilize the tools available from within the unique cultural milieu of the learner—tools substantially related to the family, the community and the spiritual and religious values of the culture—and create an environment where entering and exiting multiple worlds is comfortable.

Folk Religiosity/Popular Wisdom

Folk wisdom and popular religiosity, which contain the collective wisdom obtained from indigenous categories, provide for the *mestizo/a* a means of bridging the disparate worlds traversed by immigrants living in the Unites States. With roots in native American and *Mexica* cultures, popular religiosity constitutes "a privileged locus of. . . . self-disclosure"[25]; a locus for the most authentic spiritual and personal disclosure of the *mestizo/a*. Nevertheless, religious beliefs and rituals are not the sole contribution of popular wisdom. Orlando O. Espín points out that, insofar as folk religion expresses the wisdom of the community, in addition to religiosity, *mestizo/a* folk wisdom reflects: "the courage, the fear,

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[25] Goizueta, We Are a People, xvii.

the hope, the fatalism, the faith in God and the temptation to magical manipulation, the strength of the family, the machismo of our patriarchal society, the deep respect for motherhood and the stereotyping of women."[26] As such, popular wisdom reflects the values most important to Latinos/as, for example, family, religion and community. I suggest that, in the *mestizo/a* community surveyed above in Chapter 1, the collective knowledge of the community reflects a popular wisdom and popular religiosity grounded in the culture of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica.

Part of the cultural identity of most Mexicans, popular folk wisdom was transmitted from parent to child, from one generation to the next. Initially, it was passed from the indigenous parent to both "pure" and *mestizo/a* offspring, out of sight and out of reach of the dominant religious leaders. Eventually this wisdom, and the religious rituals and practices it provoked, became part of a popular way of life, a way of maintaining cultural and religious links with the past. Thus, the indigenous understanding of the sacred world, "beyond the comprehension, and beneath the contempt, of the 'enlightened' bourgeois mentality," became the way in which the masses of people expressed their communion with their God and community.[27] By means of this direct communion with the Creator and cosmos, the people derived meaning for their lives.

Wisdom derived from popular religiosity reveals the preservation of deeply held experiences of profound encounters with God—experiences that embody all of nature.

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[26] Orlando O. Espín, "Grace and Humanness: A Hispanic Perspective," in We Are a People, ed. Goizueta, 150.

[27] Gustavo Gutiérrez, The Power of the Poor in History (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 189.

Indigenous spirituality teaches that the center of this experience is spirit; its mode is resonance and vibration. The spirit represents the unity, cohesion, and synthesis of all that has come before, and all that is to come, bound into the community and the human soul. Resonance and vibration are at the very foundation of life, the fundamental quality of the creator endowed upon all creation. Through these qualities are generated a common bond amongst all earthly creatures. By way of this connection between spirit and cosmos, we can conceive of an organic unity within the cosmos, of a cosmic sense of spirit, of an *alma Chicana*. This *alma*, a gift of the creator to the created, recognizes that the world is holy—the oldest and deepest certitude of the *Mexica* world.[28] It also recognizes the sensuous and the tactile, a product of the meeting between the Mediterranean civilization and the indigenous world of the Americas.

Even today, the spirituality expressed by the vast majority of *mestizo/a* Americans in Southern California conveys the development, preservation, and communication of multiple symbols and symbol making systems, symbols that illustrate deep beliefs and experiences of profound encounters with the spiritual dimension of life. As alluded to in the discussion of descriptive semiotics, above, symbols are derived from the everyday life of the community and shape the meaning of everyday occurrences. It is widely acknowledged that the daily spiritual reflection done in Latino/a communities is symbolic-cultural. Here, meaning flows from and is constructed from multiple symbols and symbol making systems. C. Gilbert Romero suggests that, "popular religion is one of the ways in which this world of symbols is transmitted and it constitutes the expression of our consent to the reality to which that

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[28] García, "Sources and Loci of Hispanic Theology," 36.

language and those symbols point."[29] To accurately and completely interpret these symbol making systems, educators must draw upon the wisdom found in the traditions of the community.

In today's immigrant communities, folk religiosity is centered on the performance of ritualistic customs, the celebration of feasts for saints, and the adherence to a culturally defined, strict, value system. It combines the indigenous traditions of Mesoamerica with popular Catholicism, the tradition of balancing wets and dries, hots and colds, and the *Espiritismo* tradition of trance induction. In these communities, the celebration of *Dia de los muertos*, the status given *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, reverence and respect for one's elders and grandmothers, an understanding of the cosmos and of one's relationship to the pantheon of the *santos* are a few examples of the impact of the ancient symbols and the meaning given them by popular religiosity. Each of these traditions—*Dia de los muertos*, veneration of *la Virgen*, reverence for one's elders, the significance of the cosmos and of one's relationship to the pantheon of the *santos*—is grounded in beliefs derived from the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica.[30] Likewise, the current understanding of the meaning of life is derived from a popular wisdom that emerged from a synthesis of multiple realities—a *mestizaje*. These multiple belief systems, and the symbols derived from these systems, are so deeply rooted in the community that educators and theologians "must give equal

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[29] C. Gilbert Romero, Hispanic Devotional Piety: Tracing the Biblical Roots (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), 18.

[30] Reverence for elders stems from a cyclical understanding of time. In the world of the *Mexica*, there were 52 years (*tonal*) in a complete cycle. A person who survived the fate of each of the 52 different *tonal* was thought to possess significant wisdom. To survive each *tonal* twice demonstrated that a person was endowed with special powers.

consideration to the cultural strata out of which this *mestizaje* emerges."[31] It is essential that, to accurately express the multiple realities lived by the *mestizo/a*, the leaders of the community interpret correctly the realities experienced by the people as realities rooted in a spiritual encounter with the cosmos that ultimately affirms the possibility of a reality radically different from the present social order.[32] This vision allows popular religiosity to serve as a source of credible hope, since, "through its complex symbol-making system, [it] seems to have successfully managed to maintain the dream of a solidaristic, caring alternative."[33]

Any discussion of popular religious practices and culture must also include the importance of syncretism and the concept of dual cultural and religious rituals. To the extent the above-named traditions are integrated into every day sanctioned religious practices they represent a true syncretism. To the extent they stand outside the every day sanctioned religious practices and are practiced in private, they represent a dual system, a cultural bi-location manifest as a spiritual bi-religiosity. As characterized by Robert Schreiter, syncretism is the synthesis or mixing of elements of two or more cultures or religious systems to create a new practice or belief. Schreiter claims that beliefs, customs, rituals and traditions are the fruit of an historically situated people in the same sense that a coral reef slowly builds by piling layer upon layer, fashioned by the friction of the waves. In the process, one, if not both systems lose their basic structure and identity.[34] Differing ideas are first valued or

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[31] Isasi-Diaz and Tarango, 5f.

[32] Aquino, 20.

[33] Espín, "A Multicultural Church?" quoted in Aquino, 20.

[34] Schreiter, 144.

evaluated according to existing beliefs; those which have an affinity with the existing culture will be most readily acceptable. On the other hand, cultural beliefs that are intimately tied with a sense of place, security or cultural identity will strongly resist change.

In examining the way in which indigenous religious systems interact with Christianity, Schreiter identifies three types of syncretism. The first occurs where Christianity and another tradition combine to form a new reality; the second occurs where Christianity provides the framework for the syncretistic system, "but is reinterpreted and reshaped substantially";[35] the third occurs where selected elements of Christianity are incorporated into another system. In addition to syncretism, two cultures can meet and continue to function side-by-side, independent of one another. This dual religious system is common in areas of the Southwest, particularly in Northern New Mexico, where the indigenous people of the region continue to practice their way of life as they have for centuries. In analyzing an emerging culture for signs of syncretism, it is helpful to understand the context of the encounter of the cultures involved. A syncretistic system will normally develop where the receiving culture is receptive to and in harmony with the dominant system. A dual system, on the other hand, is more likely to evolve out of a situation where the two cultures are in conflict or initially encounter each other in the context of a conflict. In any case, syncretism and dual systems are not simply means of describing religion and theology, they are also helpful in analyzing and describing political and cultural practices in a community.

Typically, religious beliefs and traditions acquired from the *Nahuatl* speaking peoples

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[35]Ibid., 148.

of ancient Mesoamerica were not sanctioned by the institutional church and were practiced

outside of it. In this respect the beliefs and traditions function as a separate religious system

and contribute to a notion of bi- or multiple-religiosity. As a separate entity, this faith system

can be construed as a separate religious system, perhaps the least invaded social construct of

mestizo/a culture. This is the place where myth, tradition and ritual are protected from the

scrutiny of the outside world—the place where tradition and ritual are passed on from one

generation to the next. It is here that the values of the culture are most similar to the

indigenous values of the ancestors. It is precisely here—in the myths, rituals, and traditions

transmitted over the centuries—that the search for the locus of a Chicano/a identity must

begin. The process of that search is described in Chapter 5.

The Immigrant Experience

Since the middle of the twentieth century, migration patterns in the Western

Hemisphere have undergone a remarkable shift. Everywhere on this continent, people are on

the move: indigenous peoples, displaced farmers, educated professionals and people who for

generations have lived in the safety of their local dwellings are now migrating; each of them,

envisioning a better life, is drawn toward the hope the new world offers. Philosophers and

social-scientists, poets and writers, noting the trend, exclaim that, "after hundreds of years,

the direction of the world has changed."[36] Advocates for immigrant's rights often fail to

articulate a clear response to the plight of the immigrant. Enmeshed in lives far removed

from the lives of those migrating, their studies and statistics are supportive of whichever side

of the argument they happen to promote. In the end immigrants remain shrouded in "myth,

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[36] Earl Shorris, Latinos: A Biography of the People (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 127.

misinformation, or no information."[37] Meanwhile, politicians, academics, and bureaucrats tell whichever story fits their purpose.

In the United States, immigrants fit into many categories: there are those who are "legal" with a visa, temporary legal (guest worker, student, visitor), political refugees, and environmental refugees. The remainder are undocumented. Legal passage to the United States is limited to the very few well educated and rich, the great majority are left with only one option: cross by any means possible. Between the 1960s and the early 1990s, undocumented immigration continued unabated as increased levels of migration occurred amongst persons with no legal means of entering the U.S. For example, *braceros*, those in guest worker programs, tired of bureaucratic requirements, opted for illegal entry into the United States. Many were encouraged to follow this route by employers anxious to circumvent government regulations. Millions of Mexicans resisted the bracero experience altogether, crossing back and forth across the border without official sanction. Ultimately many of the undocumented settled on the land around the border. Finally, in the late 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans became legal U.S. immigrants, resulting in further movement across the border.[38]

Nobody knows for sure how many undocumented immigrants there are in the United States; the estimates range from four to twelve million people. The *Colegio de la Frontera Norte* in Baja, California, estimates that in addition to almost five million Mexicans in the

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[37] Davis, xii.

[38] Oscar J. Martinez, Border People: Life and Society in the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 145.

United States legally, there are another two million more living and working illegally in the United States. All of these numbers are no more than speculation; numbers pulled from the imaginations of self-proclaimed experts—powerful people attempting to defend their specific position. The fact is nobody knows how many undocumented immigrants are here or how many cross the border annually.

> Educated guesses are based on other guesses. The quest for certainty turns guesses into estimates presented by "experts" in articles, books, and congressional hearings, which turn them into facts. But each expert has a different view, a different interpretation, a different set of calculations depending on the position taken or defended.[39]

I have concluded that all estimates are skewed by the failure to take into consideration the reality that many undocumented people enter and leave the U.S. on a regular or seasonal basis—thus, they may be "counted" many times in a single year! It is estimated that currently 1,500 people enter the United States on a given night. Some experts claim this number is too low, some claim it is too high. Regardless, it is believed that 90 percent of all illegal crossings into Southern California occur between Tijuana and Mexicali.

There are several reasons why people migrate to the United States. Push factors include: overpopulation; under-employment or unemployment; persecution due to gender or sexual preference; political persecution; inadequate water supply; environmental degradation with no further sustainable land; depletion of fuel sources or pollution; and seeking after adventure.

In a number of Latin American countries death squads routinely kill gay and lesbian people. Gender problems, spouse battering, oppression as a result of same sex relationships,

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[39] Davis, 103.

and rape are common occurrences sanctioned by social standards apart from the wishes of the persons involved. Issues of sexual orientation and gender violence directed at persons due to their sexual orientation are becoming important factors contributing to and influencing men and women to consider immigration. In this respect sex abuse is also a push factor. Women who have been beaten, abused, raped, and oppressed are most likely to seek escape. In these countries abuse is not something perpetrated on women only by the enemy; it is also an accepted means of relating to women and of dealing with women who exceed the limits established by a patriarchical society. Sexual and physical abuse is dispensed by husbands, fathers, or boyfriends. Transnational migration is one strategy of dealing with, escaping from, or managing oppression due to gender violence or sexual orientation.

Pull factors influencing immigration include: employment—greater ability to support a family, build a house, or make a better life, need to pay off a debt, start a business, or buy property. The vast majority of those surveyed in Chapter 1 indicated that they came to the U.S. for the economic opportunity. Other employment opportunities include, guest worker schemes, educational opportunities for oneself or one's children and social services.[40] Recent immigrants to the United States, surprised by the current mass hysteria against immigrants proclaim:

> I haven't come to rob, I've come to work. It cost me a lot of work for what I earn. My daughter and I haven't eaten anything, and with all of this we are working however we can.[41]

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[40] Davis, 218: "My greatest hope is with my daughter, that she will finish the university. I also hope she is able to help us with the others."

[41] Ibid., 214.

In the United States, to get rid of all the illegals, you don't need a border or the Immigration. Simply, if there is no work, what would the illegals do there? Really, I don't see the reason to form groups and lines at the border like in the thirties.[42]

We don't have time to be terrorists. All we are interested in is feeding our families. The truth is we don't take any jobs that Americans would want because they can collect more from welfare than the wages we work for. Look, if there were work in Mexico we wouldn't be here. We have to go where there's work.[43]

In short, beyond survival, economic reasons motivate large numbers of people to migrate to this country. This is highlighted by these words from a woman living in L.A. County:

I came to the United States because I wanted to work. I am from Ecuador. There is no work there, if there is there is little money to be made. We came here to help our grandparents. We send money back home. In this country Americans don't like us *Hispanic* people. But they like how we work.[44]

Most authorities agree, however, that

immigration . . . is an historical movement. It is not a social movement; it is not an economic movement; it is not a political movement. It's a historical movement. People are coming up. They're diligent people.[45]

Regardless of the reasons, both documented and undocumented immigrants have access to better economic conditions in the United States. While legal status may lead to more employment opportunities and greater chance for economic advancement, the economic and political life of the undocumented is frequently better in the United States than in their countries of origin.

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[42] Ibid., 410.

[43] Ibid., 36.

[44] Personal communication. Note the use of *Hispanic* as a term of both inclusion and exclusion. She identifies herself as part of the greater "Hispanic" population, but also separates herself from the common belief that all "illegals" are Mexican.

[45] Davis, 416.

Whether immigration is social, economic, political, or historical one thing is certain, *"migration is a people's movement, spontaneous, without planning or sanction by either government."*[46] Whatever the reasons for migrating—economic, political, oppression—their home is now on both sides of the border. This schism creates a tension that tugs at allegiances. While the present and future is in the U.S., the past is in their homeland, the land of their origin. Each immigrant must come to terms with the reality of life on the border, a life lived between two worlds.

Conclusion

This chapter provides the essential reasons why an alternative method of education will better equip the young immigrant and Chicano/a learner to operate in the alien world represented by the North American system of education. I have examined, from a cultural perspective, distinctive features of *mestizo/a* American history and culture—cultural particularities that are remnants of a blending of indigenous and Ibero-European ways of life that have survived over centuries. This analysis helps identify those aspects of the culture most vulnerable to identity mis-construction and ethno-stress in the midst of an oppressive system. With this analysis as a common point of reference it is easy to understand that "underlying the Mexican historical experience and identity is a profound quest for legitimacy and authenticity. The attainment of that legitimacy and authenticity has been a task repeatedly frustrated."[47]

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[46] Davis, 248 (emphasis in original).

[47] Allan Figueroa Deck, The Second Wave: Hispanic Ministry and the Evangelization of Cultures (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 31.

Octavio Paz, in his work The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico, provides a "metahistory"; that is, he delves behind the events and finds in the rites and symbols of the *Mexica* world the seeds of today's *mestizo/a* society.[48] I contend that Paz' insight provides a starting point for a culturally grounded discussion concerned with the difficulty of educating and liberating today's Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Utilizing the historically conditioned stories, rites and symbols of the indigenous *Mexic Amerindian* world, educators can assist in dispelling the unremitting quest for legitimacy and authenticity. This will occur only when a system of education compatible with the epistemological framework of the *mestizo/a* learner is incorporated into the learning strategy. Chapter 3 will begin that process.

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[48] Octavio Paz, The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico (New York: Grove Press, 1961).

CHAPTER 3

The Struggle for Education

> Institutions of education in North America [are] seen as consciously or unconsciously imperialistic, for they consistently maintain the privileges and power of an elite and perpetuate an attitude of dependence or submission among those viewed as powerless. The students within existing institutions and programs are viewed as being coerced into being socialized and dominated via the educational experience in ways that maintain the position and power of those viewed as knowledgeable, experienced, and powerful. Rather than enabling the empowerment of all persons, educational practice is seen as eliminating any dialogue, negotiation, or confrontation among all participants, except for the maintenance of hierarchical status relationships and authority.[1]

This chapter will explore the present day struggle for education experienced by *mestizo/a* American learners. After describing the abject condition of education endured historically by the Chicano/a learner in the Los Angeles County school system, I will explore reasons for this state of affairs. I will show that the struggle to construct and maintain a healthy identity—as difficult as is the affirmation, maintenance and transmission of one's culture in a subaltern and oftentimes hostile environment—becomes a significant function of identity formation itself. This is because people, like communities, appropriate socially constituted identities as a function of their race, class, national origin and understanding of their place in the larger society. In no way is this discussion intended to imply that the cultural and epistemological dissimilarities present in the Chicano/a learner reflect a cultural deficiency or a missing or faulty upbringing.

Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger argue that school learning is about constructing identities—it is the "historical production, transformation, and change of persons" through

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[1] Pazmiño, <u>Latin American Journey</u>, 34.

pedagogical practices towards reproducing the social values, behaviors, cultural knowledge, and type of social person defined by the dominant majority as appropriate.[2] Therefore, by its very nature, education can not be neutral; as a fundamental agent of acculturation it either perpetuates the prevailing social order or transforms it.[3] As an agent of acculturation it seems impossible that the system of education embraced by American society will ever result in the transformation of society. By continuing to utilize its current methods and practices, the system will simply continue to reproduce the primary dominant culture rather than result in the transformation of culture.

An essential premise of this project is that, despite the rhetoric, in the United States of the twenty-first century, the goal of the school system is to perpetuate the prevailing social order. Stanley Hauerwas, critiquing the influence of the Enlightenment mentality on the "alleged pluralistic state of education," makes the observation that, "in the name of objectivity, the quest for the universal, and most of all societal peace," the hidden agenda of North American schools is the suppression of voices emanating from the periphery. Ironically, the suppression of those voices is accomplished "in the interest of fostering communication."[4] Robert Bellah, commenting on the relationship between the Enlightenment mentality and modern educational practices, finds a correlation between this mentality and the modern debate over immigration and nativism versus cultural pluralism.

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[2] Lave and Wenger, <u>Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 51.

[3] See Freire, <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u>, chap. 2.

[4] Stanley Hauerwas, "On Witnessing Our Story: Christian Education in Liberal Societies," in <u>Schooling Christians</u>, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and John H. Westerhoff, III, 224.

"In fact," he claims, "American police forces (and public schools) emerged initially only in conjunction with large-scale immigration."[5] Both Hauerwas and Bellah argue that the fundamental paradigm out of which traditional education originated and continues to operate limits the degree to which it is capable of transforming society. From an ontological perspective, modern education will never be capable of transforming society and will continue to pursue an agenda that suppresses the voices of 'the other-as-object' who are located on the periphery, because it cannot, by its very nature, recognize an objective reality outside the center.

An unfortunate consequence of this so-called hidden agenda is the cultivation of a racist agenda, either overtly—via an assimilationist mentality, or covertly—by encouragement of popular American culture. This racist agenda, though denied vehemently by members of the socially privileged classes, is not hidden to those who are labeled "minorities" by the privileged few in control. Despite the multiple American myths that promise success, equal access to higher education and the "good life," the reality experienced by the learner who is a member of the non-privileged, so-called minority class, reveals that the uniqueness cultivated within their primary culture is not appropriate for public display. Those whose background and culture diverges from the norm, learn very early in life that the Euro-centric world in which they operate dictates their public life—their manner of communication and their way-of-being—including thought, action and talk. It becomes apparent to the so-called minority learner at a young age that there are codes or rules for

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[5] Robert N. Bellah, The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in a Time of Trial (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 102f.

participation in the power structure. The rules of this culture of power are dictated by and reflective of those who have power, implying that one culture is dominant and will continue to be dominant. Those students with different customs and norms are considered substandard or inappropriate; those whose rules diverge from societal rules are incorrect, and those with distinct ways of communicating, thinking and being are perceived as inferior. The inability to publicly display the beliefs and characteristics of their culture stifles the identity of the young Latino/a learner.

Identity formation takes on greater significance where there exists a fundamental dissimilarity in the social construction of reality. *Mestizo/a* Americans, descendants of a residually oral, collective society, construct their meaning-making systems in ways similar to those of their ancestors and hence perceive and respond to the world in unique ways. Differences in perception render the school system irrelevant and uncomfortable. Latino/a learners struggle to maintain solidarities, boundaries, space, and group membership in the midst of this alienating context. The alienating contexts in which young Chicanos/as find themselves, include: the local community with its racial, ethnic and economic stratifications; the school district in general; the school administration at the local level; classroom activities and personal interactions within classrooms; and the pedagogical practices of educators. Within this stifling context, the *mestizo/a* learner is compelled to surrender to one of the following methods of survival: to succumb to the temptation of popular culture and become assimilated; to successfully maneuver between two worlds and form a dual or multiple identity; or to lose the ability to form what the dominant culture defines as a healthy identity and become "socially challenged."

The inherent power differential that separates the Latino/a learner from popular American culture, combined with the dissimilar epistemological construction of reality, places these young learners in dubious positions. Educators who are willing to meet the challenge by utilizing methods derived from the primary cultural milieu of the learner can assist in the process of identity formation. Unfortunately, by demanding assimilation, they can also hinder that process.

The School System in Los Angeles County: The Statistics

In the United States the public school system is often extolled as the "great equalizer," the institution where those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds can obtain an education equivalent to the education obtained by the well-to-do and privileged. In the process, the poor and disadvantaged person who studies hard and abides by all the rules can learn valuable "critical thinking" skills, become a "life-long learner" and discover the pathway to financial security and economic freedom. Because the respondents whose opinions were surveyed in Chapter 1, above, reside primarily in Los Angeles County, I will explore the success of the Los Angeles County school system in educating the many *mestizos/as* in its midst. The themes and messages raised by the respondents will be considered in the analysis.

It is the L.A. County school system that is considered the institution most important in influencing progress and upward mobility for the many *mestizo/a* Americans who live within its boundaries. For the Latino/a child, it is this school system which is, "the main hope of rising above a destiny severely limited by class and race: 'the stairway to heaven.'"[6]

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[6] Acuña, Anything But Mexican, 289.

Unfortunately, numerous studies and statistics reveal the disparity in education found even today between persons of various socioeconomic and ethnic groups living in and around the Southern California region. For years experts have debated theories and argued reasons for the so-called education gap that exists between the so-called minority population and the general population. None of these theories offer an adequate perspective of the reality facing the young Latino/a who must contend with the enormity of the school system in the county.

The condition of schools and the condition of the education available in predominantly Latino/a neighborhoods has remained unchanged over a period of many years.[7] Unlike non-Latino/a neighborhoods, schools in Latino/a neighborhoods are more likely to be over-crowded, older and more frequently used year round. These conditions have contributed to a situation where Latinos/as are the most undereducated ethnic group, dropout of school at a rate greater than the general population and have the highest illiteracy rate. That this is the rule rather than the exception is supported by the statistics.

In 1970, the President's Commission on Campus Unrest concluded that "the inferior schooling of America's blacks has prevented many from attending college."[8] At that time 27.1 percent of all public school children in the Southwestern United States were so-called minorities—17.2 percent Chicano and 9.9 percent African American.[9] Of these students, 60

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[7] Ibid., 292. For an excellent critique of the state of affairs of education for the Latino/a in the U.S., see Darder, Torres, and Gutiérrez, eds., Latinos and Education.

[8] United States, "President's Commission on Campus Unrest," Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1970), 105.

[9] Mexican American Educational Study, Report 1: Ethnic Isolation of Mexican Americans in Public Schools of the Southwest (Washington D.C.: United States Commission on Civil Rights, April 1971), 17.

percent of Chicanos and 67 percent of African Americans eventually graduated from high school as compared to a 76 percent graduation rate for all students and 86 percent for Anglos.[10] A dismal 22 percent of Chicanos and 29 percent of African American students entered college and only five Chicanos and eight African Americans of the original one hundred in each group ever completed college. The overwhelming majority of those who remained in college may well have been better off had they too dropped out. Most of them failed to achieve even the minimal standards established by the schools.[11] Test scores from the 1970s revealed that between 50 to 70 percent of Chicano and African American students in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades read below grade level, while only 25 to 34 percent of Anglo children in the same grades read below grade level. Sadly, these statistics reflected the reading level of those students who remained in school; if the reading level of the entire population were considered the reading levels would have been substantially lower. Furthermore, the severity of reading retardation increased the longer the student remained in the public school system.

In 1970, Anglo children averaged 12.1 years of schooling while African American students average 9.0 years and Chicano students average 7.1 years.[12] When the entire Mexican American population in the southwestern United States is considered, 30 percent of

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[10] Mexican American Educational Study, Report II: The Unfinished Education (Washington D.C.: United States Commission on Civil Rights, October 1971), 40.

[11] Ibid., 18.

[12] Philip D. Ortega, "Montezuma's Children" The Center Magazine, Nov. - Dec. 1970, 3.

the total were either illiterate or functionally illiterate in the late 1960s.[13] In 1975 only 2

percent of the freshman enrolling in four year universities were Mexican American.[14]

One would expect that the situation would improve with time. However, while

mestizo/a Americans accounted for over 63 percent of pupils in the Los Angles Unified

School District and close to 70 percent of those in elementary schools in 1992—twenty years

before, only 22 percent of Los Angeles students were Latino/a—the statistics are still

dismal.[15] As recently as 1987,

> Latino/a third graders averaged scores of 500 on the California Assessment
> Program math and reading tests, compared with 614 for whites. By the eighth
> grade the gap was 414 to 567. Latino high school seniors performed at the ninth-
> grade level in reading.[16]

The results of the Stanford 9 standardized test scores in English and math for the

entire state of California for the year 2000, reveal a positive correlation between percentage

of Latino/a student enrollment and low test scores. The scores for Los Angeles County were

a full 10 percent lower than the entire state of California for all grade levels.

Nationally, the dropout rate from high school for Latinos/as continues to be higher

than for any other racial or ethnic group—approximately 30 percent.[17] All studies that

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[13] David F. Gomez, Somos Chicanos: Strangers in Our Own Land (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 103.

[14] The Washington Post, "Universities Enrolling Fewer Black Students," cited in the Los Angeles Times, 25 May 1975, VI, 14.

[15] Acuña, Anything But Mexican, 289.

[16] Ibid., 290.

[17] American Council on Education, Minorities in Higher Education: Fourteenth Annual Status Report (Washington D.C.: American Council on Education, Office of Minority Concerns, 1995). See also U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research, Dropout Rates in the United States (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1999).

compare the educational level of Latino/as relative to the rest of the population reveal an alarming pattern of low completion rates and low rates of transition from one level to another.

> Statewide, the high school dropout rate was double that of white students; 54 percent of the 19,381 high school students dropping out of the LAUSD in 1987/88 were Latinos. Overall, in the late 1980s Latinos had a 40 percent high school dropout rate, lower than the 46 percent among African Americans, but much higher than the rate among Anglos.[18]

Some attribute this high dropout rate to migration and language—of the students who dropped out, 80 percent are dominant Spanish language speakers.[19] In contrast, a report by the Department of Education in 1992, revealed that even though 200,000 of 625,000 students were Limited English Placement (LEP) students, growing by 10 percent per year, the high Latino/a dropout rate would continue even if immigration declined.[20]

The most recent report available from the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), The Condition of Public Education in Los Angeles County, 1996, discloses a number of significant statistics about the nature of the education provided by schools in the county. For example, while the percentage of the Latino/a student population in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education is growing statewide, the rate of high school graduation and college attainment in Los Angeles county is higher than the state of California

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[18] Acuña, Anything But Mexican, 290.

[19] See Esmeralda Barnes, "Study Shows High Latino Dropout Rate Linked to Immigration Patterns," Black Issues in Higher Education , 28 Jan ,1993, 35.

[20] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Are Hispanic Dropout Rates Related to Migration? (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1992).

"for every racial group, except for the Hispanic origin ethnicity."[21] Here, 31% of so-called "Hispanics" drop out prior to graduation from high school—a rate higher than any other ethnic group—and also earn the lowest rate of enrollment in advanced classes at all levels. Furthermore, the number of Latino/a students that earn a high school diploma or a post-secondary degree has not increased despite the marked increase in the number of Latino/a students in the school system.

More enlightening than these statistics, however, are the presuppositions the LACOE publication reveals. Because of the proximity of Los Angeles County to México, the editors of the document published by the Office of Education expect "Los Angeles's Hispanic educational attainment rates to be lower than California's."[22] They then proudly proclaim that, "if we excluded Hispanics, Los Angeles County's residents are better educated than California's."[23] Statements such as these betray the pervasive misunderstanding of the true roots of oppression found even in institutions who claim to have the best intentions of its' students in mind.

The Struggle for Education: The Excuses

Numerous theories have been proposed in an attempt to explain why education, in general, is a struggle for Latinos/as. After reviewing the more common explanations, including socioeconomic status, utilization of bi-cultural teachers with similar ethnic backgrounds, and level of education attained by the mother, I will address the more deep-

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[21] Los Angeles, County of, The Condition of Public Education in L.A. County, 1996 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Office of Education, 1997), 4-4

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

seated reasons for the existing educational disparity.

Socioeconomic Status

A student's socioeconomic status is frequently raised as the most important issue impacting success in school. This excuse is often used by administrators of schools in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods; it is expected that these schools will produce students with poor grades or test scores. Abundant evidence supports this conclusion. Virtually all studies indicate that there is a consistent relationship between student performance, her or his performance on achievement tests and the socioeconomic status of the student. California Learning Assessment System (CLAS) scores from 1994 reveal that "there was no test at any grade level which did not show a sharp drop-off in performance as the community became less affluent."[24] In 1985, parents of California seniors with average SAT scores of 600 to 649 had average incomes of $54,000, while parents of those with average scores of 350 to 399 had average incomes of $39,000. The most recent data reveals that two-thirds of the students who take the SAT exam in Los Angeles Unified School District are from families whose reported incomes is less than $30,000 annually.[25] The 1990 census found that 14.3 million North American Latino/a children under the age of eighteen were living in poverty, this indicates that over 40 percent of all Latino/a children live beneath the poverty line. Furthermore, *mestizo/a* Americans represent the only ethnic groups in the United States to have experienced no improvement in their socioeconomic status between

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[24] Ibid., 1-2.

[25] Ibid., 4-4.

1980 and 1990.[26]

There is no doubt that socioeconomic level impacts student performance. Because 40 percent of Latino/a children live with families whose income is beneath the poverty line, increasing the economic opportunity of these families will increase their chances of success in school. It will not, however, improve the alienating environment of the institution and will, therefore, have a limited impact. Furthermore, geographic location in an economically disadvantaged environment is no excuse for the school system to expect or accept failure from the students in that school.

Utilization of Teachers with Similar Cultural Backgrounds

Educators suggest that increasing the number of "Hispanic" teachers a school district has on its staff—an implication that every effort is taken to provide students with positive role-models—will ensure the success of the *mestizo/a* learner. In fact, research conducted by Gloria Powell in the 1960s suggests that there is a positive correlation between a healthy self-image and a young student's opportunity to learn and develop academically in a school setting where the child's primary culture is respected, reinforced and modeled.[27] Furthermore, academic success usually improves as a result of personalization of the educational experience. The U.S. Department of Education, in a study of factors influencing the success of Latino/a students in the United States, concluded that culturally-sensitive schools, teachers, counselors, and staff will increase the academic success of Latino/a

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[26] Sonia M. Peréz, "Shedding Light on Latino Poverty: Public Policies to Make the Invisible Poor Neither," Report: Empowerment and Latino Families 3-4 (Fall/Winter 1994-1995): 21-24.

[27] Gloria J. Powell with Marielle Fuller, Black Monday's Children: A Study of the Effects of School Desegregation on Self-concepts of Southern Children (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1973).

students.[28] That being the case, one would conclude that school districts are hiring teachers who model the primary culture of the student. However, the teaching profession continues to be dominated by non-minority men and women. An NEA survey conducted in 1991, reported that 86.5 percent of all public school teachers were white, the same percentage reported in 1971.[29] In the early 1990s in California, 36 percent of the students and 7.5 percent of the teachers were Latino. In Los Angeles, where 63 percent of the students are Latino, only 12 percent of the teachers are Latino. In reality, the actual number is smaller due to the careless way in which the classification "Hispanic" is used. When teachers of Mexican and Central American origin are counted, they total only 6 to 8 percent.[30]

In many instances, even when a teacher is able to integrate a culturally sensitive, welcoming environment into the classroom, he or she is limited by curriculum, institutional standards, or lack of institutional leadership. In order to truly improve the success of the Chicano/a learner, administrators and leaders whose sensitivity to the cultural uniqueness of the community allows them to institute meaningful changes into the structure and curriculum of the school must be hired and promoted.

Education Attained by Mother

When administrators tire of blaming the student for their failure, they point to one or both parents as the cause of a child's failure. This is accomplished in one of two ways: the

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[28] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement No More Excuses: The Final Report of the Hispanic Dropout Project (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1998).

[29] Stephanie Grace, "White Men, Women Dominate Teaching Corps," Los Angles Times, 7 July 1992, cited in Acuña, 293.

[30] Maribel Hastings, "Desproporción en la Nacion Entre Maestros y Alumnos Latinos, Reitera Un Estudio," La Opinion, 27 Oct. 1993, cited in Acuña, 293.

most common ruse is to suggest that Latino/a parents are not interested in educating their children. The second is to suggest that parents are so uneducated that they cannot assist their children with their schoolwork. Research indicates that there is a positive correlation between reading achievement scores on the California Assessment Program tests and the average schooling attained by the mother. "Students whose mother had graduated from high school averaged a score of 277, while those whose mothers had not graduated from high school averaged 188."[31] In the opinions of the experts, it therefore follows that the educational success of the Latino/a learner is influenced by the level of education attained by the mother. Significantly, 42 percent of Latino high school seniors' mothers had not graduated from high school, compared with only 3 percent of whites. "Moreover, 64 percent of Mexican immigrants had eight years or less of schooling, compared with 13 percent of Koreans and 18 percent of Filipinos."[32] Furthermore, total schooling averages less than tenth grade for Latinos and 12.9 grade for Anglos.

Pointing out a parents lack of interest or the number of students with uneducated or illiterate parents, allows the school system to remove the blame from themselves. What the research does not reveal is the difficulty immigrant parents have in understanding the goals and methods of the school system. It is a system whose goals and methods are fundamentally incompatible with the educational goals and dreams of many in the Latino/a community. These concerns are rarely heard by those in control. On the infrequent occasions when the immigrant voice is heard, the concerns are deemed trivial, unimportant or, more likely, naive.

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[31] Acuña, 290.

[32] Ibid.

While each of the above factors reveal a small portion of the reason why education continues to be a struggle for the Chicano/a learner, each of them, separate or together, answers inconclusively the reasons why we find such a poorly educated people in such a technologically advanced country. Furthermore, each of te above theories places the blame on the learner or their families. In reality, Latino/a learners fail because the educational system is not constructed for their success. The systematic exclusion of the Latino/a learner from access to higher education can be traced to educational methods and practices that are inadequate for the Latino/a community. In order to identify the deeper reasons this condition exists and fashion a complete answer, an analysis of the hidden cultural struggle for identity must be considered.

The Annihilation of the Dreamers: Why Education has Failed the Chicano/a

> Anyone dreaming anything about the end of the Empire was ordered to the palace to tell of it. Night and day emissaries combed the city, and *Tenochtitlan* paid tribute in dreams . . . . But finding no good in the thousands offered, *Moctezuma* killed all the offenders. It was the massacre of the dreamers, the most pathetic of all . . . . From that day there were no more forecasts, no more dreams, terror weighed upon the spirit world . . . .[33]

In order to describe an unfamiliar world, persons must first discover ways of talking about that world using words—signs and symbols—that enable them to relate to others in socially meaningful ways. Persons from culturally conditioned ethnic or racial groups have the additional burden of first appropriating a public and private space within which they can begin the process of formulating an identity. Successful maneuvering in the world represented by the dominant society is contingent upon cultivating a core identity and

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[33] Laurette Sejourne, Burning Water: Thought and Religion in Ancient Mexico (New York: Grove Press, 1960) quoted in Ana Castillo, Massacre of the Dreamers, viii.

acquiring an ability to communicate in socially meaningful ways with the world represented

by dominant American society. Only after a secure space is acquired and a core identity is

strengthened within that space are so-called minorities able to articulate in a socially

intelligible voice. For the *mestizo/a* learner, this process involves the construction of a

private life and then many times the traumatic reconstruction of the world in the public arena.

The results of an unsettled process can be deleterious to the young child. When left

unresolved, it contributes to the breakdown of one's core identity and the increased

likelihood of ethno-stress.

Because the goal of education in the United States is to steer all persons into one

homogeneous culture—the dominant American culture—young Latino/a learners, from the

time they enter grade school, are systematically denied an identity as a member of a so-called

racial and ethnic minority. This process communicates a message of perceived inferiority

and insecurity; ultimately children lose touch with the dreams and values of their primary

culture. Educationally, the result is an uprooting of people from non-dominant cultures and

the ensuing death of the dreamers. In fact, because the entire process of education is not

sensitive to the needs of people with differences, there is little doubt that the educational

system in the United States is not healthy for the *mestizo/a*. Jose Angel Gutiérrez, founder of

La Raza Unida Party, compares the current system to a shoe store.

> [C]hildren go to the educational shoe store asking for a size seven, and the
> salesperson there tells them that the shoes only come in size six. So therefore to
> fit our feet to those shoes we cut off our toes.[34]

By stating what is obvious to Latino/a learners, Gutiérrez provides a starting point for

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[34] Interview with Jose Angel Gutiérrez, in Guerrero, 50.

understanding the perspective of the disenfranchised Chicano/a. For years Chicanos/as have been admonished that success in school is dependent upon their ability to "fit in." The reasoning is as follows: "There is nothing wrong with the school system, the fault lies with you." Gutiérrez' analogy suggests a fundamental reason why the fault is systemic and not cultural. His analogy can be broadened to include all so-called minorities—indigenous Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, women, and gays and lesbians. All of these people, collectively, certainly do not constitute a minority of the population. Still, members of these groups are now or have in the past been perceived as different by the dominant population, specifically by those in positions of power. The system and its curriculum, by restricting the parameters of the learning environment and stifling the search for legitimacy, intensifies the felt inferiority of members of racial or ethnic groups, including *mestizo/a* American adults and children. Likewise, there exists an enormous incompatibility between the needs of the Chicano/a community and the services the school system provides. In fact, any person or group of persons operating from within a different cultural paradigm will be relegated to the margins. Their needs are ultimately incompatible with the services supplied by the system at large.

Private schools are not immune to these failures either; Protestant and Catholic church schools in Southern California, like their secular counterparts, are increasingly incompatible with the needs of the Latino/a community. This is revealed by the surprisingly low level of participation in religious education—despite a comparably high level of church participation and an even higher level of professed faith—through the primary and secondary school years. Most children receive only the religious formation that parents provide without

the aid of catechists, the parish personnel, or lay teachers.[35] Allan Figueroa Deck speculates

that the reason for this is that church parishes in California fail to relate in culturally specific

ways to the *mestizo/a* Americans. He identifies five models church parishes follow when

dealing with these communities in Southern California. These models are (1) The

Americanizing parish: "one in which the clergy and frequently the lay leaders decide that

newcomers will have to adapt themselves to the way things have always been done"; (2) the

ethnic or national parish: "characterized by a kind of unspoken policy of doing things as

closely as possible to how they were done in México"; (3) the missionary parish: "often

staffed by Anglos" or others outside the culture; (4) the divided parish: "where cultural

groups are served in isolation from one another"; and (5) the integrated parish: "difficult to

achieve" because of the need for a number of bilingual members.[36] The examples provided

by Deck illustrate churches operating respectively out of (1) an assimilationist model; (2) a

primary enculturated model; (3) a colonized model; (4) a nativist model; or (5) an

acculturated or a many-culture model. These models are similar to the four models Ricardo

L. Garcia and Charles Foster suggest operate currently within the public school system in the

United States: (1) the "White Conformity Model," which maintains that some people are

inferior and marginal because of their cultural, racial, and/or ethnic origin; (2) the "Melting

Pot Model," which characterized education in the United States prior to the 1960s; (3) the

"Cultural-Pluralism Model," which stresses the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities into

the life of the nation, community, school, or church; and (4) the "Multicultural Model,"

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[35] Deck, Second Wave, 76.

[36] Ibid., 61-63.

which is committed to creating environments where students from all cultural groups will experience educational equity. Adherents of the "Multicultural Model" model also advocate making changes within the institution that will allow students from diverse ethnic groups to have equitable educational opportunities.[37]

With the exception of the "Multicultural Model," each of the models represent paradigms of education that are culturally alienating—stifling creative expression and resulting in the loss of human imagination. Adherents of these models of education adopt all or part of an assimilationist philosophy—paternalistically expecting those who are different to assimilate into the mainstream rather than modifying the mainstream to accommodate those who are different. Perhaps this is so because the dominant North American cultural reality regards assimilation as equivalent to enculturation—the process by which people are inducted into a new culture through a progressive conversion. The fact is that assimilation, viewed from a subaltern perspective, is destructive of people's primary culture and personal identity.

The arguments offered on the following pages indicate reasons why, educationally, Chicanos/as are at risk. They are derived from the works of Fernando Segovia, Rodolfo F. Acuña, Felix M. Padilla, Susan E. Keefe and Amado M. Padilla. Briefly, these authorities state that, (1) the Latino/a learner approaches the world with different philosophical roots and therefore incompatible epistemological foundations; (2) the negative effects of assimilation

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[37] Ricardo L. Garcia, Teaching in a Pluralistic Society: Concepts, Models, Strategies (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 8, 105; and Richard Foster, "Double Messages: Ethnocentricism in the Education of the Church," Religious Education 82 (Summer 1987): 447-67, cited in Pazmiño, Latin American Journey, 113-17.

generate cultural alienation in the Latino/a learner; (3) the existence of the "glass ceiling" blocks the advancement of all except the best and brightest; (4) the experience of immigration can negatively impact both the immigrant and their offspring; and (5) problems associated with assimilation, acculturation and ethnic identity interfere with successful transition between cultures, including the culture of the classroom.[38] It is expected that these assumptions, when explored in detail, will provide a hint as to why education is a struggle for the Latino/a learner living in Southern California.

Divergent Philosophical Roots and Epistemological Foundations

Institutionally, schools have failed to be inclusive and sensitive to the different social, psychological and cognitive constructs of the *mestizo/a* child. Fernando Segovia suggests that education and scholarship prove to be a constant struggle for the *mestizo/a* American learner because the philosophical roots and epistemological constructs of education in the United States "are profoundly and quite understandably Euro-American."[39] Especially critical for those whose formative years are spent in the U.S. school system, this reality creates a context where "different contents and modes of discourse" are rarely accepted or respected and less often acknowledged as equal or as an alternate vision of reality. It is clear that the problem of education across cultures is not just one of different contents, distinct

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[38] Fernando F. Segovia, "Theological Education and Scholarship as Struggle: The Life of Racial/Ethnic Minorities in the Profession" Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 2 (Nov. 1994): 12. See also Rodolfo F. Acuña, Anything But Mexican; and Occupied America: A History of Chicanos, 4th ed. (New York: Longman, 2000); Sixto J. Garcia, "Sources and Loci of Hispanic Theology"; Felix M. Padilla, The Struggle of Latino/Latina University Students: In Search of a Liberating Education (New York: Routledge, 1997); Keefe and Padilla, Chicano Ethnicity; and Gary Riebe-Estrella, "Latinos and Theological Education," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 4 (Feb. 1997): 5-12.

[39] Segovia, 11.

manners of discourse or *maneras de ser*, critical as these are; it is also a "problem of perception and attitudes."[40]

Because the philosophical roots and epistemological foundations of education in the United States are profoundly and quite understandably Euro-American, the approach to education and learning is Eurocentric, male, humanistic and analytic-rationalistic. This mind-set is in direct conflict with the experience of Latino/a learners. In Latin America, Catholic tradition, in contrast to the European Protestant, stresses "the grafting of Catholic faith onto the rich vine of indigenous ritual, symbol and myth."[41] The pressure the Latino/a learner endures in navigating between these two disparate approaches, derived from two disparate world-views, are indicative of the arduous task any person must address if they expect to be academically and functionally literate in the two cultures they attempt to bridge. From an indigenous perspective, there is little in common between the cultural framework out of which their world is constructed and popular American culture. In the next chapter, I will explore the epistemology of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica and identify aspects of their culture that make it difficult to communicate between the two worlds.

Negative Affects of Assimilation: Personal and Cultural Alienation

> When I was little and I hadn't started school yet, I thought God was a chubby, little, daddy-like figure who was friendly and happy and ate beans and tortillas and shot down a tequila now and then, and that He like to laugh a lot and have a good time. I never had the idea that God was tall and strong and authoritative and would send you to hell if you misbehaved, until I started school.[42]

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[40] Ibid., 12.

[41] Deck, "At the Crossroads," 4.

[42] Victor Villaseñor, Walking Stars: Stories of Magic and Power (Houston: Piñata Books, 1994), 8.

Children learn, cultivate and maintain within themselves unique understandings of the world and its purpose. As they approach the learning process, they attempt to solve problems and interact with their environment employing the tools furnished by their primary culture. Unfortunately, for the young Chicano/a learner, those tools often sharply conflict with or challenge the expectations of teachers and administrators. Perhaps this is because those from the dominant culture—those at the center—have very little knowledge of or connection with those on the so-called margins. This mis-communication frequently results in confusion and alienation. These fears and other negative feelings were expressed repeatedly by the adult respondents who experienced, as children, the difference between home life and public life in the Los Angeles County school system. Each of the respondents experienced this difference between public and private life as a *rechazo*—a tearing apart and violation of their most intimate self. Ultimately the loss of their primary identity was understood as a personal death. I heard this first from my father as he related his experiences during his first days in a public school. It took him years to overcome the embarrassment and sense of shame he felt as a young child whose tongue was rendered useless and whose soul was clouded with the fear of discovery. Like any young person who enters a foreign school for the first time, Latinos/as entering public or private schools encounter an "alien philosophical context" as well as "an *alienating* context."[43] It is no wonder that the primary charge aimed toward the educational establishment by the *mestizo/a* American community is that as academic institutions they fail not only to be inclusive, but more important they fail to be understanding of the world view and context of Latinos/as and others on the margins. Furthermore, there is

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[43] Segovia, 12.

a strong belief that these institutions continue to be paternalistic in their encounters. In contrast, a paradigm of education that originates from the indigenous belief that "each child that comes into the world is our latest messenger from God,"[44] will respect the multiple contexts from which students derive their world-views and listen to them and treat them with the respect, love and understanding such a perspective demands.

The Glass Ceiling

The so-called "glass ceiling" in schools and the marketplace—a level surpassed primarily by those whose identity conforms to the expected norm or who possess the proper credentials—provides an additional struggle for the Latino/a learner. In general, only those "specially chosen for promotion and advancement largely in terms of window-dressing" or tokenism, make it above this ceiling.[45] Even when awards, promotions or acceptance into schools is academically deserved, questions are raised concerning the qualifications of the candidate. In many instances the implication is made that the so-called minority replaced a better qualified non-minority applicant. The situation is similar in academic institutions flaunting their liberal-humanist beliefs and commitments; "indeed, the situation may be even worse in such contexts, because the hidden agenda at work is never overt but always quite subtle."[46]

Not surprisingly, in many institutions of higher learning, there exists an underlying and powerful emphasis on consensus and conformity. These institutions are, admittedly or

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[44] Victor Villaseñor, Snow Goose Global Thanksgiving (Oceanside, Calif.: Snow Goose Publications, 1993), 70.

[45] Segovia, 12.

[46] Ibid., 14.

not, following a Euro-centric paradigm of universalism.

> It is a paradigm . . . with a decided preference for common features or characteristics and a corresponding distaste for differences or dissimilarities. . . . It follows the modernist project of progress and development through universalism and away from any sort of tribalism or nationalism. . . . If [we] stress now . . . the dissimilarities, it is only because of the need to balance the long-standing modernist stress on commonalities, which in turn were ultimately defined by the dominant culture and thus exhibited an eerie resemblance to the particularities of that culture.[47]

In contrast, indigenous epistemology focuses on the both/and—emphasizing both differences and similarities—as opposed to an epistemology which recognizes dissimilarities through its focus exclusively on the either/or. Within indigenous frameworks the focus is on the particular individual in a unique context, a specific community and world. To understand this apparent paradox is to understand how, in an indigenous paradigm, the particular resonates with and is incorporated into the whole.

The Immigrant Experience: Acculturation vs. Assimilation

Earl Shorris places Latino/a immigrants into one of five distinct categories: the Immigrants—"the hopeful poor who come to the U.S. willing to abandon their national culture"; the Transporters—"failed immigrants, who come hoping to change their life situation, but end up repeating it"; the Sojourners—"the distrustful poor who hold on to their national culture because they intend to return"; the Exiles—"the angry rich who maintain their national culture as a sign of defiance"; and the Ghosts—" the embattled poor who left their home and culture without leaving their native country." First generation Mexican immigrants, depending on their reasons for entering this country, are represented in the

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[47] Ibid.

categories "Immigrant" and "Sojourner"; their U.S. born children generally are represented in the category "Transporter." Readily relocating to the United States, an undisputed majority of the respondents I surveyed were hopeful and optimistic about their future in the United States; they fall into Shorris' category of "Immigrant."[48] Unlike those Shorris described, however, the respondents I surveyed had no intention of abandoning their cultural practices and beliefs.

Regardless of their reasons for migrating, upon entering the United States numerous immigrants from Latin American countries, including México, assert their cultural identity by choosing to remain marginalized; that is, they choose to exist as a "foreign other" and to maintain their primary cultural identity. Of the respondents I surveyed, "habit" and "tradition" were the most frequently encountered reason for maintaining cultural practices. Although they were anxious to learn the traditions and customs of popular American culture, there was a comfort in holding on to the known. Furthermore, for those who settled in communities whose survival mechanism complies with the "Stabilized Differences" or "Realigned Pluralism" models described in Chapter 2, there was no reason to abandon their primary cultural practices.

Keeping unique cultural practices is achieved in spite of a system which encourages immigrants to conform to the system of racial and ethnic categories advocated in the United States. Thus, Brazilians remain Brazilian, Mexicans remain Mexican and Costa Ricans remain Costa Rican. For the Mexican immigrant, acculturation is a slow, multi-generational,

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[48] Shorris, 130-45. Shorris places Cuban Americans in the category of "Exile" and Puerto Ricans in the category of "Ghost."

selective process. That is, socially, Mexicans and their children remain within ethnically enclosed primary groups, although they may interact more often with Anglo Americans in secondary relations.[49] Many factors determine the level, degree and rate of acculturation: the degree of generation since immigration, the reasons for immigration, socio-economic status, religion, geographical residence, level of education, current age and age at immigration.

Significant differences in the level of acculturation vary by generation. Ordinarily, first generation immigrants remain the least acculturated. In addition, persons who continue to be unacculturated are most likely to be less educated, lower in socioeconomic status, and less socio-economically mobile. In many cases, passage to the new land involved distressing, sometimes traumatic occurrences. Those who suffered these stressors may revert for long periods of time to their primary culture or language, even if that culture or language was learned during childhood.

Acculturative stress arises for the first generation immigrant who attempts to resolve perceived cultural differences by creating fundamental changes in their lifestyles and patterns of interacting with the dominant culture. These new behaviors, which also include adapting to a new system of values, eventually involves relinquishing old beliefs and behaviors. Traditionally, however, this stress begins to ease within a decade as the immigrant succumbs to the dominant ideology and begins to identify themselves as Latino or Latina.[50]

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[49] Keefe and Padilla, 23.

[50] Laurie Olsen, Made in America: Immigrant Students in our Public Schools (New York: New Press, 1997), 117. According to Olsen, those who identify themselves as "Latino/a," more often than any other ethnic group, give up the immigrant belief in school success. Ultimately this group has the lowest grade point average, the highest drop out rate and the lowest rate of college attendance. See above for an alternative explanation.

Among second and third generation children of immigrants, the level of acculturation achieved as an adult is thought to be a function of childhood experiences in the family, community and of educational opportunities. Increased educational opportunities may account for younger persons having higher levels of acculturation.[51] Conversely, success in school may be a result of psycho-social resiliency in the face of an alien environment. In addition to level of education attained, different levels of acculturation and psycho-social adaptation to a new cultural environment takes the individual through several different adaptive phases—each phase changing with the conditions of life. A common phenomenon amongst persons of color is the emergence of those who are de-assimilated. That is, they have shed the cultural baggage of dominant society and reverted to their primary culture in both their public and their privates lives—they have become part of the "mentally decolonized." This is commonly observed in the third generation descendants of immigrants from México.

Another important factor in the rate and degree of acculturation in Latino/a immigrants, one overlooked by many, is the importance of ethnic identification and cultural awareness. Whereas cultural awareness measures a person's knowledge of or familiarity with cultural traits or traditions—its language, history and myths—degree of ethnic identification is related to and dependent upon both ethnic loyalty and cultural awareness. Ethnic identity measures more than the knowledge, awareness or maintenance of so-called cultural traits; it measures non-quantifiable qualities such as loyalty, perhaps even allegiance. Identification

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[51] Jose Fragoso, "Adaptation, Acculturation, and Ethnicity," Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences 13 (Nov. 1991): 452.

with a particular ethnic group encourages ethnic adhesion, a condition wherein "the particular

assemblage of cultural traits becomes less important than the attitudes of members toward the

people and culture of in-group versus out-group as well as members' self-identification."[52]

This is essentially the same as "Ethnic Loyalty," which reflects perceptions and preferences

that arise from more individually shaped interpretations about cultural groups. Ethnic loyalty

measures the preference for one cultural orientation and ethnic group over against another.

For the Mexican immigrant or their first, second or third generation descendant, ethnic

loyalty involves an

> individual's attitudes and feelings concerning Mexican culture, people of Mexican
> descent, and ethnic discrimination. These qualities are, rather, the mental
> construct—the symbolic reality, if you will—which individuals create concerning
> their ethnicity.[53]

According to Keefe and Padilla, although directly correlated to the rate of acculturation and

degree of ethnic identity, the degree of cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty are independent

of one another. Interestingly, whereas the largest decrease in cultural awareness amongst

families immigrating from México occurs between the first and second generation, and

thereafter continues to decrease steadily through the fourth generation, ethnic loyalty

decreases slightly between the first and second generation and *thereafter it remains virtually*

constant through the fourth generation.[54]

> This finding is extremely important because it demonstrates that cultural change is
> not a simple unilinear dimension. . . . In fact, the loss of Cultural Awareness on

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[52] Keefe and Padilla, 41.

[53] Ibid., 48

[54] Ibid., 50-52. (Emphasis in original).

the part of our respondents is at least partially independent of Ethnic Loyalty, which explains why it is not uncommon to meet a third- or fourth-generation Mexican American who does not speak Spanish and knows relatively little about his/her cultural background, but retains pride in his/her Mexican heritage and enjoys associating with Mexican people.[55]

This multidimensional model of acculturation supports the concept of a selective acculturation whereby persons adopt specific values and customs while simultaneously retaining their most meaningful traditional values and customs.[56] For most immigrants, the retention of traditional values occurs simultaneously with the adoption of new values and traditions. This suggests that cultural and familial institutions are not obsolete and irrelevant, rather they serve as adaptive social forms strategically used by immigrants to realize their goals.[57] What we can conclude from this information is that the second and third generation descendants of the Latin American immigrant will fail to assimilate according to the modern myth of the melting pot. Each generation lives out of a unique context, progressively becoming a combination of popular American culture and *mestizo/a* American culture, a new *mestizaje*. These new cultures are infused with epistemological elements of the indigenous and the dominant culture. It is a unique culture that refuses to become part of the immigrant parent culture or part of the adopted culture; rather, it is one that travels perpetually between worlds, living in a constant state of *nepantla*. This implies that the pivotal issue is not simply

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[55] Ibid., 52.

[56] This is also supported by Charles Neggy and Donald J. Woods, "The Importance of Acculturation in Understanding Research with Hispanic-Americans" Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences 14 (May 1992): 224-47.

[57] Nazli Kibria, Family Tightrope: The Changing Lives of Vietnamese Americans (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 19. In her approach, Kibria highlights the agency of the immigrant by using the concept of adaptive strategies to describe immigrant familial adaptation.

providing an affirming, receptive environment for the recent immigrant, or their second and third generation descendant, but educating them in ways that will facilitate their comfort in passing between multiple disparate worlds.

The Futility of Assimilation

Lost in the battle over public policy and education is the unpopular reality that Native Americans and Chicanos/as are the two ethnic groups most likely to maintain more differences than similarities relative to the dominant culture and to preserve their own distinct culture, language and religion.[58] Children born into these families, even children whose entire lives are spent in the United States and whose primary language is English, are enculturated from birth to interpret and respond to the world from the epistemological construct of their family's country of origin. This indigenous world-view and the cultural lens with which it equips these children to perceive the world is often at odds with the framework of the dominant middle-class American world.

In many L.A. County schools—as part of the process for evaluating and determining whether or not to place a child in a remedial program—children are asked a series of questions testing their auditory perceptual skills. The questions are asked in either in English or Spanish, or both, depending on their comfort level with English or their level of English awareness. Although no statistics are available, the majority of children answer in ways that indicate that their cognitive patterns of thinking are derived from an oral or residually oral

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[58] Bellah, Broken Covenant, 91.

culture.[59] For instance when asked why balloons float, they answer, "because they are

round." Other questions and answers include:

Question: What propels a sailboat?	Answer: "the water"
Question: What causes the night?	Answer: "the dark"
Question: What steers a train?	Answer: "the tracks"
Question: What causes ice to melt?	Answer: "the sun"
Question: What makes a ball roll?	Answer: "because you roll it"
Question: What part of the car gives it power?	Answer: "the gas"
Question: What pumps the blood?	Answer: "the veins"
Question: Why do clouds move?	Answer: "the wind moves them"
Question: What keeps a dog warm?	Answer: "the sun"
Question: What happens when you cut with a knife?	Answer: "it cuts food"
Question: What lights a bulb?	Answer: "the switch"

After a series of questions, patterns emerge—these children respond to the questions

with answers derived from their unique cultural framework, one that contains vestiges of an

oral heritage. These results are consistent with previous findings that demonstrate that

cognitive skills are constructed and shaped in the context of experience and through social

interaction.[60] In an oral culture, "human events take on meaning only to the extent that they

can be located within a storied universe that continually retells itself."[61] In oral or residually

oral cultures, causal relationships are justified by their relationship to the self and the local

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[59] Personal communication with R. E. Casas, school counselor. These interviews were given over a period of 5 years. For an extensive overview of the role of language as a means of conquest and its role in the formation of cognitive structures see Edward G. Gray and Norman Fiering, eds. The Language Encounter in the Americas, 1492-1800. European and Global Interaction, vol. 1. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000). Bambi B. Schieffelin and Elinor Ochs point out that cognitive skills originate in interaction in sociocultural contexts. Language and culture are acquired together in the same interactive process. Schieffelin and Ochs, "Language Socialization," Annual Review of Anthropology 15 (1986): 163-91. See also Francis Norbert, "The Shared Conceptual System and Language Processing in Bilingual Children: Findings from Literacy Assessment in Spanish Náhuatl," Applied Linguistics 21 (June 2000): 170-204.

[60] Katherine Nelson, Language in Cognitive Development: The Emergence of the Mediated Mind (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.)

[61] Abram, 187. See Chapter 2 above, pages 98f for further discussion of oral cultures.

environment; for instance, the function of tools is described by their usefulness. Likewise, there is an emphasis on function rather than abstraction; facts and ideas can only be understood when connected to everyday activities and answers to questions are given with respect to the functional use of an object. In their answers, the children interviewed compared objects to like objects and assumed that events occur by happenstance. Their answers indicate that the social framework from which they construct their reality is infused with elements of a residually oral culture.

Children derive values and moral precepts from within their uniquely culturally conditioned framework; these serve as a guide for patterns of relationships and proper behavior within those relationships and with the broader world. The inevitable clash of frameworks, values and societal expectations that occurs upon entering the mainstream world—a process which usually takes place between the ages of five to 10 years of age—places the young Chicano/a child in a precarious position. With an incomplete identity and inadequate coping mechanisms, these young children are forced into contact with a culture whose epistemic constructs are different—sometimes diametrically opposed—to their own. Acculturated into a system by an educational process whose epistemological assumptions are foreign to those of their primary culture, research indicates that as these children mature, they experience a conflict of identity, personal and cultural.[62]

The cultural genocide that Chicanos/as endure is one consequence of the American preference for assimilation as a prerequisite to full participation in the social and political life of the community. Proponents of this perspective picture the social order from the top down

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[62] See Oboler, and Cajete.

and discount the social realities experienced by both the immigrant *mestizo/a* and their native-born second or third generation descendants.[63] Assimilation into the mainstream culture as a means of acceptance, has as its goal the obliteration of difference. An assimilationist point of view maintains that—in the interest of individual autonomy and freedom—adaptation to the values of the dominant American culture compels the disappearance of so-called "minority" sub-cultures and the acceptance of an uncompromising American identity. This dominant North American ideology requires that any so-called "minority" living in the United States deny the cultural characteristics that make-up their private way of life. Homogeneity is assumed to be the basis for successful integration into society and the precondition for granting the rights of full citizenship.[64]

Assimilation is supported by those who argue for the survival of a common national identity as a priority. To this end, a diverse national population is not in the best interest of the United States, instead, "homogeneity is assumed to be the basis for political stability and economic growth."[65] The erroneous assumption made by proponents of assimilation is that whereas negative values and behaviors seen in persons who are two or three generations removed from the first generation immigrant are a result of clinging to the traditions and customs of the motherland, positive—socially acceptable—changes in values and behaviors result from the desire of those people to discard their past and become like Anglos.

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[63] For further discussion see Norma Williams, The Mexican American Family: Tradition and Change (New York: General Hall, 1990).

[64] See Darder, "The Politics of Biculturalism: Culture and Difference in the Formation of *Warriors for Gringostroika* and *The New Mestiza*,"in The Latino Studies Reader, 129.

[65] Blanca G. Silvestrini, "The World We Enter When Claiming Rights": Latinos and Their Quest for Culture," in Latino Cultural Citizenship, ed. Flores and Benmayor, 46.

Those Latinos/as who do assimilate into and live lives indistinct from the dominant culture may experience future disadvantage, however. In one sense, total assimilation never totally occurs; outward signs of assimilation simply reveal a psychological means of ego survival—an attempt to secure acceptance by imitating a foreign culture.[66] What may resemble a successful process of assimilation to those outside the culture, actually results in ethno-stress, an imposed, missing or incomplete identity formation that is frequently a source of cultural and social marginalization.

Ethno-stress and marginalization are the most common consequences of denying or failing to resolve the many complex moral, psychological and philosophical differences children encounter when traversing between dominant and non-dominant cultures. Realistically, Latino/as who are successful in the dominant world construct a resilient multiple identity and move back and forth "from cultural citizenship to legal citizenship and from one identity to the other."[67] That is, they choose to be organically acculturated rather than assimilated; in so doing they maintain simultaneously their ethnic heritage and "find *a middle way wherein American culture may be added to, rather than substituted for, their own heritage.*"[68] Those who are successful in completing this positive response pattern, do so surreptitiously; out of sight and unseen by dominant society. Those who are unable to make this transition are labeled cultural misfits and permanently relegated to the periphery. It is this segment of society that requires special consideration from educators. Rather than

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[66] Vento, 121.

[67] Silvestrini, 46.

[68] Deck, Second Wave, 101 (emphasis in original).

labeling these students failures and relegating them to the permanent underclass, it is the duty of the educator to construct pedagogy and educational methodologies that will involve the learner in the education process.

All pedagogy, religious or secular, which desires to be taken seriously must recognize the unique aspects of the subaltern cultures in its midst if it hopes to impact the society it faces. The task at hand for *mestizo/a* American educators—who are expected to be academically and functionally efficient in the two cultures they hope to bridge—is to identify, respond to and ameliorate ethno-stress and marginalization prior to their inception. This is best achieved by assisting these students in the development of an identity which provides the tools necessary to ease the transition from one cultural paradigm to another. This suggests that for the young Latino/a living in the United States the preferred goal of identity formation is the construction of a "dual identity"—the maintenance of one's primary cultural identity in conjunction with knowledge of and ability to function in the dominant culture.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has explored the present day struggle for education endured by *mestizo/a* learners. I have shown that the struggle to construct and maintain a healthy identity in the midst of the violent and unequal encounter of cultures is a significant liability for the Chicano/a. Factors which contribute to this liability and evolve into a sense of ethno-stress, *rechazo* and bi-location, include (1) the need for the Latino/a learner to approach the world with a philosophical lens and an epistemological foundation incompatible with the modern school system; (2) the negative effects of assimilation that generate cultural alienation; (3) the existence of a "glass ceiling" which blocks the advancement of all except the best and

brightest; (4) the effects of immigration upon the immigrant and their offspring; and (5)

problems associated with assimilation, acculturation and ethnic identity. Collectively, these

factors contribute to the sense of alienation and loss felt by the young learner. Complicating

the alienation is the inability of the leaders of the school system to adapt to the needs of the

Chicano/a learner. Insisting that the fault lies within the community, this patriarchical

response has historically resulted in a loss of vision in the community.

> Perhaps the greatest harm patriarchy has done to us is to stifle, coopt, and deform
> our powers of imagination. Moralisms, dualistic dogmas, repressive prohibitions
> block our imagination at its sources . . . .[69]

When combined with the pervasive effects of racism, these "-isms" prove to be destructive to

indigenous epistemological frameworks which are grounded in a spiritual understanding

unfamiliar to the modern world. The indigenous spiritual and religious dimensions of the

culture will be explored in Part II.

Further compounding these losses is the method of preparing leaders for work within

these communities. Traditionally, those who "show promise" are removed from their

communities and contexts and trained in schools whose epistemological frameworks are

predominantly Western; ultimately, this methodology reshapes the world-view and mentality

of the learner. Prakash and Esteva extensively document the results of a Western, school-

based education upon the offspring of community elders and the communities involved.[70] A

significant consequence of this violent and destructive clash of paradigms that takes place in

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[69] Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor, The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), quoted in Castillo, viii.

[70] Prakash and Esteva, Escaping Education.

the process, is the loss of leaders whose values reflect their culture or whose paradigms are grounded in the visionary framework of their ancestors. This loss is particularly felt by *mestizo/a* Americans. All institutions of education—public, private and religious—must begin to nurture and cultivate dedicated leaders from within the Latino/a community utilizing models of education sensitive to the needs of this specific community. Furthermore, it is essential that these models of education be grounded in the wisdom constructed and transmitted by the people. To do this demands an indigenous epistemological framework, an integrative methodology and an imaginative pedagogy.

I have up to this point briefly reviewed the epistemological assumptions found in the U.S. system of education that create a struggle for those on the margins. Most Chicanos/as endure this struggle as they attempt to find their way through the maze which is the dominant culture. Before beginning the next task, the unveiling of an epistemology and methodology more specific to the indigenous framework of the Latino/a learner, it is necessary to delve into that culture in some detail. Chapter 4 outlines the *Mexica* system and philosophy of education, describing and analyzing the pre- and post-conquest strategy for educating persons. In constructing this located pedagogy, I will focus on the formation of personhood and identity, "making-face, making-heart." By outlining the philosophical and historical roots of the *Mexica* epistemology, Chapter 4 will set the stage for understanding the notion of "making-face making-heart"—the *Nahuatl* metaphor (*difrasismo*) for formation of an integrated person.

Part II

The *Mexica*

Part II will describe and analyze the pre-conquest philosophy and system of education that evolved in Central México. The goal is to reveal the epistemological foundations of *Nahuatl* philosophy. The philosophical basis and epistemological framework for people-making in the *Nahuatl* speaking world was derived from a cosmology that viewed all of creation as an organic unity. An educated person, formed with the intention of being placed into the life of the community, was considered to be one who practiced rigorous discipline, who was well versed in the community narrative and who understood his or her relationship to the cosmos and to the community. By outlining the philosophical and historical roots of the philosophy and system of education derived in the fifteenth and sixteenth century by the *Mexica*, Chapter 4 will set the stage for understanding the principle of "making-face making-heart"—the *Nahuatl difrasismo* for formation or construction of personhood.

Subsequently, the *Mexica* system of education was replaced by schools administered by the Franciscans and other Christian missionaries. Chapter 5 demonstrates that the underlying philosophical framework of the people did not change and continues to exist today. Implicitly, the framework for all belief's continue to be grounded in a theological anthropology centered on the idea of duality (*Ometéotl*), an organic understanding of one's relationship to the community and cosmos (*tonal*), and constant movement (*ollin*). Essential to the development of this argument is demonstrating that an undercurrent of Mesoamerican beliefs and practices persisted over the centuries. I will show that as the newly constituted hybrid Mesoamerican culture made the transition from one with an indigenous world-view

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into one that was outwardly European, its rituals and practices did not disappear, they were merely relegated to the periphery of civic life. It will also be established that "well articulated, precontact beliefs continued to inform . . . all but the most fully acculturated forms of *Nahua* spirituality."[1] These ritual beliefs and practices carried the wisdom of the ancestors within them. At their core, concealed within a matrix that preserved the ancient understanding of the sacred and the profane, they embodied the philosophical constructs of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica. In private and out of sight of the priests and leaders, elements of the old culture were transmitted from one generation to the next. The transmission of this wisdom, and the identity it embraced, was conveyed predominantly through the domains of popular religion and popular healing rituals, two spheres of life and thought that were inextricably linked and intimately inseparable. These spheres became the locus of a new, hidden resistance, impenetrable by the conqueror.

Popular religion and popular healing rituals, spheres of resistance intricately interwoven with the religious beliefs and epistemology of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica, comprised a sturdy matrix around which the culture was communicated. This matrix is the basis for the cultural resiliency of the people and culture. Part II concludes that, while there are some elements of syncretism present in the world-view of the modern day *mestizo*, it is more likely that the indigenous, *mestizo/a* and Chicano/a learners utilize a dual or multiple system for negotiating the world.

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[1] J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "Aztec Spirituality and Nahuatized Christianty" in <u>South and Meso-American Native Spirituality: From the Cult of the Feathered Serpent to the Theology of Liberation</u>, ed. Gary H. Gossen, (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 182.

CHAPTER 4

Foundations of an Indigenous Pedagogy

> The mature man
> is a heart solid as a rock,
> is a wise face.
> Possessor of a face, possessor of a heart,
> he is able and understanding.[2]

The rudimentary framework for a philosophy of education in the fifteenth century

Nahuatl speaking world of Central México was derived from a conception of the cosmos as

an organic unity. In the *Mexica* construct of reality, humanity was engaged in an orderly, yet

slippery, relationship with the creator and, by extension, with the entire cosmos. Preservation

of this relationship was considered essential to the maintenance of the universe; it demanded

a moral code and a system of ethical behavior consistent with the regulations of the

community and the life force of the cosmos. To fully indoctrinate the people into the national

ideology, and therefore ensure the maintenance of the cosmos, schools were established and

education was made compulsory for all children.

In *Tenochtitlan*, to educate meant to "give wisdom to the face." The fundamental

purpose of education was the formation of persons who were made complete by practicing

rigorous discipline, by becoming well versed in the community narrative, and by

understanding their relationship to the cosmos and to the community. The goal of all

education was that every learner be formed within a specific domain where they would

ultimately assume a purposeful role in the life of the community. In this context, becoming

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[2] Códice Matritense del la Real Academia, 8, fol. 118, v, quoted in León-Portilla, <u>Aztec Thought and Culture</u>, 141.

human signified becoming socially fashioned into a community with a past and a future. Successful incorporation into the story of the community confirmed formation of a complete face and heart. In the end, each person, while dependent upon the whims of the gods and the demands of the state, controlled his or her own destiny in the context of the community by choosing to make a complete face and honest heart.

Crucial to a meaningful modern interpretation of "personhood and identity" is the requisite knowledge that, in the pre-Colombian world of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica, the prevailing philosophy, anthropology and theology contained no categories capable of understanding the modern western ideal of the individual. Rather, personhood was defined as a function of the community—the idea of a solitary individual self was unintelligible. Born without a face—that is, anonymous—each persons' identity was subject to formation by and within a community. In the *Nahuatl* speaking world, the self—literally the modern day equivalent of personality—was represented as "face and heart," *ix-tli* and *yóllotl*. The most appropriate modern translation for face, *ix-tli*, is what modern psychology refers to as the ego. *Ix-tli* describes "the most individual characteristic of the human being—the very element which removed anonymity."[3] A proper face, one that displayed a purposeful public appearance, was formed through proper training and education.

The second element of the *difrasismo* (metaphor), the heart or *yóllotl*, was derived from the *Nahuatl* word for movement, *ollin*. *Yóllotl* symbolized the unsettled element of dynamism found in the ego. This dynamism was the aspect of the personality that caused

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[3] León-Portilla, <u>Aztec Thought and Culture</u>, 113. Since there is no word translated as man or woman in *Nahuatl*—a person was named according to their purpose or actions in the world—the Spanish were unable to translate the words *hombre* or *mujer*.

persons to search for wisdom through any number of activities. In the *Cantares Mexicanos*,

the priests and philosophers repeatedly question the purpose of searching for truth on earth.

The heart, created with an element of unsettled dynamism, remains restless until it is fulfilled

by true wisdom.

> What are you recalling? Where are your hearts? You scatter your heart, you carry it here and there, your heart is troubled on earth. Where can you be esteemed? Come return! Hear the good songs! Soften your heart with flower water. They're spreading fragrance. There! I, the singer, am lifting good songs, entertaining the Ever present, the Ever Near (*in tloque in nahuaque*).[4]

The heart, created to be dynamic, is, by nature, troubled and pursues gratification by

"scattering here and there" attempting to fill the perception of emptiness. In the *Nahuatl*

speaking world, flower and song were the *difrasismo* for wisdom. Wisdom was attainable

only by understanding poetry, the wisdom of the gods. Finding "flower water" in the context

of "good songs" signified attaining true wisdom, the same wisdom enjoyed by the creator, the

lord of the near and the close—*in tloque in nahuaque*. Thus, only when the heart's natural

inclination for searching had found refuge in the truth and wisdom found through the Creator,

was an educated face made whole. While true education enabled a person to be integrated

into the life of the community; it also directed each person's will towards the will of the

Creator, toward self-discipline and goodness. The entire process of educating—making-face,

making-heart—involved learning the traditions of the community, incorporating oneself into

the life of the community, finding refuge and wisdom in the Creator, and passing on the

knowledge, wisdom and traditions of the Creator and community.

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[4] Bierhorst, <u>Cantares Mexicanos</u>, 139, folio 2v, song 3, 3.

Mexica Cosmology

The *Mexica* borrowed the bulk of their religious ideas and categories of thought and being from the *Tolteca*, the first of the *Nahuatl* speaking people to reach central México, who, in conjunction with the other *Nahuatl* speaking peoples of Mesoamerica, fashioned their philosophical and epistemological frameworks in conformity with an ecological paradigm of a unified cosmos. Notions of self and community were not idealized abstractions debated by theologians and philosophers; rather, *Nahuatl* categories of being originated in a theological anthropology grounded in the conception that the entire cosmos, including humanity, existed as an organic unity. These views were prominent in the region of central México prior to the arrival of the *Mexica* in 1325.[5] Ideologies contrary to the cultural legacy of the *Tolteca* empire and specific to the *Mexica* were constructed in the fifteenth century by *Tlacaelel*, chief advisor to the kings of *Tenochtitlan*. *Tlacaelel*, half-brother to *Moctezuma* I, was considered the power behind the chief rulers for several decades. He is credited with the creation of sacrificial ceremonies, the refining of the "flower wars," and the increased number of ritual sacrifices. These dogmas, labeled "martial mysticism" by León-Portilla, centered around the omnipotence of the tribal deities *Huitzilopochtli* and *Tezcatlipoca* and their relationship to the people of *Tenochtitlan*.[6]

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[5] Tula, capital city of the first *Tolteca* empire, reached its height c. 900-1050. A second Toltec empire, the *Tolteca-Chichimeca*, was born about 1100-1200. *Tolteca* is thought to mean "craftspeople" and denotes a civilized people. In contrast, the *Chichimeca*, from whom the *Mexica* originated, were considered by the people of the Valley of México to be barbarian or uncivilized.

[6] León-Portilla, Aztec Image, 163. León-Portilla argues that, in contrast to the militaristic *Tlacaelel*, the *tlamatinime*, the wise old men and women of the community, "oriented their thinking along philosophical lines that yielded a different nature for the divine, with a less conflictive image of its relationship to humankind, a less aggressive image of human nature, a more ambivalent purpose for humanity's existence, and some hope that an escape . . . was possible," Ibid.

The myth surrounding *Huitzilopochtli's* birth reflects the *Mexica* understanding of the cyclical nature of life and death. In the primeval creation story, *Coatlicue*, mother of the sun, the moon, and the stars, magically conceived *Huitzilopochtli*, the sun deity, on *Coatepec*, "the Mountain of the serpent." Annoyed, dishonored and sensing the significance of his birth, *Coyolxauhqui*, the moon goddess and daughter of *Coatlicue*, plotted with her brothers, the *Centzon Huitznahua*—who represented the stars—to kill *Coatlicue* before *Huitzilopochtli* was born. Forewarned of the attack by one of his uncles, *Huitzilopochtli* was born fully grown and armed. With a swift blow of the fire serpent, he dismembered *Coyolxauhqui,* left her head on the mountaintop and flung her body to the bottom of *Coatepec*. Pursuing the remainder of the gods off the mountain, he was able to save his mother and defeat his siblings just as the rising sun each morning "defeats" the stars and the moon.[7] The violent clash within the family of the deity became for the *Mexica* a symbolic re-enactment of the daily struggle between the sun, the moon and the stars.

In his original manifestation, *Huitzilopochtli* symbolized both the "regenerative power of the world of the spirit and the imperial power of the Aztec state."[8] By incorporating the *Mexica* tribal myths into the ancient myths of the *Tolteca*, the militaristic elite, who adhered to more nationalistic beliefs and dogmas, attempted to persuade the common people, the *macehuales*, of the historical significance of the Aztec mission of empire building. Key to

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[7] Miguel León-Portilla and Earl Shorris, In the Language of Kings: An Anthology of Mesoamerican Literature—Pre-Columbian to the Present (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 205f. See also Anderson and Dibble, General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex: Book 3 – The Origin of the Gods (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research, 1978), 1-2.

[8] Markman and Markman, 381.

their strategy was replacing the ancient myths with their new ideology; this was achieved by destroying the ancient codices.[9] The newly created myths and ideologies, replacing the old ideals, glorified the dominance of the *Mexica* empire. Loyalty to the national myth and its daily re-enactment suggested that the sun's creating life for humanity must be reciprocated by humanity providing life for the sun. This, in turn, was the rationale used to establish the need for human sacrifice to appease the gods. In essence, *Quetzalcoatl*, the peaceful god of *Tula*, was replaced by the warrior gods of the *Mexica* and placed in an eternal conflict with these tribal deities.

The struggle between *Quetzalcoatl* and *Huitzilopochtli* reflected the inner struggle between the primacy of philosophy—"flower and song,"—and the primacy of the militaristic leaders of state. Even the school system, becoming divided along class lines, reflected the conflict. The *Mexica* academy for the working classes, the *telpochcalli*, taught students the way of the warrior—upholding the principles of the "jaguar and the ocelot." The non-militaristic *calmécac*, on the other hand, instructed the children of the nobility in the way of the priest and scholar—flower and song. Enmity between the groups was frequent. In folios 9 through 11 of the *Cantares Mexicanos* there is preserved a dialogue that took place between the *Nahuatl* speaking philosophers who lived within the boundaries of the triple alliance of *Tenochtitla*, *Texcoco*, and *Tacuba* in late fifteenth century central México. Its purpose was to discuss the wisdom of their ancestors and to clarify the meaning of truth, flower and song. In the end, the *tlamatinime* affirmed the principles and ideals of their ancestors. Moreover, the

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[9] Thankfully, *Nezahualcoyotl*, leader of *Texcoco*, part of the *Nahua* triple alliance, refused to comply with the command to destroy the codices and instead set out to glorify the ancient *Tolteca* philosophy and teachings.

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rhetoric utilized by the people in their every day life and taught to the children and young people in the schools continued to reflect the beliefs consistent with "flower and song" rather than the militaristic dogma promoted by *Tlacaelel*. Likewise, the "invocations and discourses delivered as part of the life-cycle rites, such as during births, deaths, marriages, and even following the election of a ruler," reflected beliefs consistent with the emphasis on "flower and song."[10]

Flower and Song: A Balanced Life

The Mesoamerican ideology of "flower and song" was centered around belief in the sole creator god *Ometéotl*, often referred to in rhetoric and writing as "the lord of the near, the nigh," or *in Tloque in Nahuaque*. Derived from ancient *Tolteca* thought, the doctrine of "flower and song" was a practical philosophy with day-to-day implications for the *pipltintzin*, the upper classes, as well as the *macehualtzin*, the common people—literally, those who are deserving. In the *Nahuatl* mind, humanity was created in a living, breathing world, and placed in an orderly, yet slippery, relationship with the gods, the earth and the cosmos. Humanity's role in the cosmos was to maintain the uneasy equilibrium that existed between these diverse and multi-layered relationships. Ensuring this balance was essential to the preservation of the universe. Doing so, however, demanded a moral and ethical behavior consistent with the regulations of the community and the life-giving force of the cosmos. For these reasons, *Mexica* parents instructed their children to take care on the road they were to follow.

Behold the road thou art to follow . . . . Take heed. On earth it is a time for care,

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[10] Markman and Markman, 207.

it is a place for caution. Behold the word; heed and guard it, and with it take your way of life, your works. On earth we live, we travel along a mountain peak. Over here there is an abyss, over there is an abyss. If you go over here, or if you go over there, you will fall in. Only in the middle does one go, does one live.[11]

The admonition to follow the path of moderation is evidence that the *Nahuatl* speaking people focused on preserving a balance in the cosmos. Yet, in no way were justification for actions on earth concerned with the laws or decrees of a distanced and detached deity.[12] From an ethical perspective, *Nahuatl* philosophical categories have no parallel with categories of sin and evil as constructed by Christian theologians; ethically, the *Mexica* were not concerned with such trivialities as salvation, an after-life or an unseen world. Instead, ethics constituted a this-worldly orientation; ethical behavior was focused on concrete realities found in the surrounding world. The struggle for earthly equilibrium, symmetry and balance required that humans take seriously the concrete reality of evil as a necessary and essential part of creation. Hence, they were as unlikely to condone excess as they were hesitant to condemn earthly desires.

> Nahua religiosity, in contrast to the Christian focus on salvation, was fundamentally apotropaic, that is, centered on averting evil through appropriate observances.[13]

Keeping evil away from oneself and ones social relations was achieved through the proper performance of rituals. All humans were subjected to the unpredictable, opposing forces of the cosmos. In this context, proper action could only be undertaken following the acquisition

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[11]Anderson and Dibble, General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex: Book 6 – Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research, 1969), 101.

[12] See Burkhart, Slippery Earth.

[13] Klor de Alva, 183.

of the proper knowledge regarding one's *actions*. Knowledge of the things to be avoided and knowledge of the proper rituals necessary for gaining the favor of the gods was essential to the sustenance of the self and the community. This, in turn, reckoned a person worthy of the blessings bestowed by the creator. Avoiding evil did not, however, guarantee eternal life in an ethereal, otherworldly place. The Christian concept of 'hell' did not exist in *Nahuatl* moral thinking. Instead, the nature and manner of one's death—not one's moral conduct in life—determined one's final destiny. In the appendix to book three of the <u>Florentine Codex</u>, Sahagún describes the resting places of the deceased.[14] Those who died in battle or childbirth secured the highest honor on the eastern side of the sun, and spent eternity in the warmth of *Tonahtiuhilhuicac*, the dwelling place of the sun. Those who died by water or by an illness associated with water spent eternity in *Tlalocan,* an earthly paradise. The vast majority of the people were believed to travel through the nine levels of *Mictlan*, literally, 'among the dead,' for four years prior to reaching their final resting place.[15]

The *Mexica* World: Embodiment of *Tloque in Nahuaque*

Todorov describes the *Mexica* world as one more oriented toward communication with the living, non-human world than the living, human world.[16] For the *Mexica*, to live in such a world was to live in a constant state of *nepantla*—between and within the spirit world and the earthly world—trapped within the spiritual void created between the two. Yet, this world was not conceived of as a place to be rejected, nor was it a place from which humanity

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[14] See Anderson and Dibble, <u>Book 3</u>, 41.

[15] León-Portilla, <u>Aztec Thought</u>, 127.

[16] Todorov, 69.

was to be detached. True, the earth was thought to be a great monster that swallowed the sun each evening, threatening all life; however, the *Mexica* knew that it also nourished humanity by providing the food that sustained life. In the world of the *Mexica* the earth represented a nurturing mother and, simultaneously, a fearful, angry beast—both the womb and the tomb of all life. That the world was perceived to be such a frightening place was due to the *Mexica* understanding of creation and the role of humanity in sustaining that creation. In this world, ideas about the human self guided the practical behavior of all society.

Ontologically, humanity was believed to be eternally connected to and intertwined with the universe. From this perspective, persons formed a continuum with others in their immediate vicinity and the world beyond. This continuum established a contiguity with the world that was both physical and spiritual. A unified concept of the individual person, for which there existed no specific philosophical categories, converged into one category side-by-side with concepts of the relational or communal self and the corporeal body in *Nahuatl* thinking.[17] These categories of being, and their underlying framework—the framework of the cosmos—were modeled after the *Nahuatl* conception of the Creator god, *Ometéotl*, the embodiment of duality. To the *Mexica, Ometéotl,* ever omnipresent, became *in tloque in nahuaque*, "Lord of the Close Vicinity," the "Lord who is present and nigh," or more

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[17] For an excellent overview of the *Nahuatl* understanding of the body and its relationship to the cosmos, see Alfredo López Austin, The Human Body and Ideology, vols. 1-2 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988). See also Sylvia Marcos, "Gender and Moral Precepts in Ancient México: Sahagun's Texts," The Special Nature of Women?, ed. Anne Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Concilium: International Review of Theology (London: SCM Press, 1991); and "Sacred Earth: Mesoamerican Perspectives," Ecology and Poverty: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor, ed. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, Concilium: International Review of Theology (London: SCM Press, 1995).

appropriate, "the one who is near to everything and to whom everything is near."[18] This

creator deity was believed to have emanated from the upper heavens—the twelfth and

thirteenth heavens—from *Omecoyan*, the source of duality. As a dual being, *Ometéotl*

simultaneously existed as a male-female unity, separately as male and female, and

independently as male or female. Thus, *Ometéotl* was the personification of three

possibilities: a coeternal dual God-Goddess, concurrently male and female, united as one

with dual aspects; a God who existed distinctly as unique male and female entities eternally

bound together; and simultaneously as a dual God-Goddess, perpetually shifting back and

forth between both aspects.

> He is the Lord and Lady of our duality (*Ometecuhtli-Omecihuatl*)
> He is Lord and Lady of our maintenance (*Tonacatecutli-Tonacacihuatl*)
> He is the mother and father of the gods, the old god . . .
> He is the star which illumines all things, and he is the Lady of the shining skirt of
> stars (*Citallatonac-Citlanicue*)
> He is our mother, our father (*in Tonan, in Tota*)
> Above all his is *Ometéotl* who dwells in the place of duality, *Omeyocan*.[19]

This triumvirate of possibilities allowed *Ometéotl* to manifest him/herself in any

number of ways at any given time and place. Depicting the *Mexica* as possessors of a

pantheon of multifarious gods and goddesses is a misinterpretation of their understanding of

the nature of *in tloque in nahuaque*. To the *Nahua* mind, the ontological nature of *in tloque*

in nahuaque allowed for multiple manifestations, temporal and spatial, as well as a coexistent

embodiment of complex essences—all of them constituting the basic substance and nature of

Ometéotl. As Creator, it was not possible to envision *Ometéotl* as a detached deity or as one

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[18] Garibay, 408.

[19] León-Portilla, Aztec Thought, 90.

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who was simply incarnated as the creative impulse of the cosmos. Rather, *Ometéotl* embodied the entire cosmos, although in multiple and complementary manifestations.

> Thus, beginning with the act of creation until the disappearance of the Fifth Sun, the world will be conceived as an essential duality–heaven and earth, above and below, light and darkness, masculine and feminine, life and death–that repeats the duality that originated it: *Tonacatecuhtli-Tonacíhuatl.*[20]

All that existed originated in and derived its nature from *Ometéotl*—life and death; the earth and heavens, both the upper world and the under world(s); the sun and the moon; good and evil; dark and light; day and night; man and woman were all believed to be complementary and dual aspects of *Ometéotl*. The revelation of these multiple manifestations occurred at any time, in one location or many. Moreover, it was not unheard of for *Ometéotl* to become manifest as two completely different representations simultaneously. These visions of multiplicity and duality were not understood by the masses in the modern sense, as analytical dualities with no subsequent synthesis, instead, they were understood as vibrant dialectical realities where the simultaneous existence of two or more opposites—or the permanent shifting from one pole to the other—was not considered an impossibility. Sylvia Marcos describes this state of affairs as, "a state of extreme dynamic tension, such as when two forces meet without resolution and veer precariously toward the edge of chaos."[21]

This multiple understanding of the nature and existence of the creator, indeed of the entire cosmos, shaped the *Nahua* perception of humanity and humanity's relationship to the

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[20] Florescano, 12. See also Lopéz Austin, 1:52: "Preeminent in this world view is the dual opposition of contrary elements, dividing the universe to explain its diversity, its order, and its movement."

[21] Sylvia Marcos, personal communication, Claremont, California. This understanding of the cosmos engendered a necessity for balance in the *Nahuatl* mind. Marcos describes such a balance as "equilibrium in motion."

world. Since the entire cosmos was understood and defined as a unity of complementary opposites struggling for fluid equilibrium, symmetry and balance, then humanity must also struggle to maintain balance. Because the creator existed as the one and the many, humans must also be constituted in their humanity as a whole—as a community. Furthermore, because the Creator could only be conceived of as plural, all reality must be construed as pluralistic, continuously reshuffling and reconnecting to multiple attachments that extended throughout the universe. And, because the cosmos was inherently infused with the life-force *ollin*, no thing was able to exist in a static state. Permanent movement was the nature of the universe—a static, unchanging world was not considered the philosophical ideal. Therefore, the Creator must be able also to change. This fundamental understanding of *Ometéotl* formed the basis for the *Nahuatl* speaking peoples conception of humanity and the ethical and moral system that motivated their every action. The role of humanity in this chaotic world was to discover the truth and to follow the path demanded by *Ometéotl*.

Creation and Humanity

Ometeotl was believed to have had four sons that assisted in the ruling of the world: *Quetzalcoatl*, and three different manifestations of *Tezcatlipoca*. Each of these sons is associated with a different color and a different direction oriented to the sun; *Quetzalcoatl* was oriented toward the West. The creation of the world passed through four transitory stages, or suns, before the advent of the fifth sun—the present day. The creative impulse that controlled each age was established by the sacrifice of a different deity for the benefit of the earth; therefore, each age possessed different qualities. At a crucial stage in each age an imbalance in the world led to chaos. Chaos was followed by a characteristically cataclysmic

destruction, and finally a new creation with a new patron deity that again displayed divine duality.[22]

> During the first age, *Ocelotonatiuh*, the earth was ruled by *Tezcatlipoca* and inhabited by giants who ate acorns. It was destroyed by jaguars on a day 4-ocelot in the Aztec ritual calendar. During the second era, *Ehecatonatiuh*, the earth was ruled by *Quetzalcoatl*, a god opposed to *Tezcatlipoca*, and inhabited by humans who ate piñón nuts. This era was ended by a great windstorm on a day 4-wind. The third era, *Tletonatiuh*, was ruled by the rain god, *Tlaloc*, and was destroyed by a rain of fire on a day 4-rain. The fourth sun, *Atonatiuh*, was ruled by *Chalchiuhtlicue*, the female counterpart of *Tlaloc*. The population subsisted on a plant that was a precursor to corn. This era was destroyed on a day 4-water by a great deluge that made the sky fall and plunged the world into darkness.[23]

According to *Nahuatl* tradition, the present world existed in the fifth age, an age which would be destroyed by earthquakes on a day 4-movement. At the onset of the present age, to ensure its inception, *Nanahuatzin,* the purulent one, ritually sacrificed himself by jumping into a huge fire. *Tecuciztecatl,* the lord of the conch shells, having failed to sacrifice himself in four previous attempts and not wanting to be outdone, followed. As his reward, *Nanahuatzin* arose in the sky as the morning sun; *Tecuciztecatl*, in contrast, arose as the moon. Thus marked the beginning of the fifth sun. It was chaotic, however, in that both the sun and the moon shone simultaneously with equal brilliance. To keep the moon away from the path of the sun, and to dim its light, one of the gods captured a rabbit and flung it at the moon. From then on the moon's light was dimmer and only able to shine during the night. Unfortunately, the sun remained fixed in the middle of the sky and was unable to rise, set or

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[22] López Austin, 1:67. López Austin reminds us that "the number 5 corresponds to the central point, the most important position in a stable world." Thus, the fifth age, the age of humanity, is the most important age.

[23] Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, <u>Aztec Medicine, Health, and Nutrition</u> (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 40.

travel through the heavens. Fearful that this apparent lack of movement, *ollin*, signified the

death of the sun and forecast their impending death, the gods cried out,

> "How shall we live? The sun cannot move," cried the gods. "Let this be, that
> through us the sun may be revived. Let all of us die."[24]

Knowing that ritually sacrificing themselves would ensure the continued movement

of the sun, the gods successfully vivified its path while they guaranteed themselves an eternal

place in the cosmos. Following the sacrifice of the gods, and with the assistance of the wind,

Ehecatl, the sun assumed its path in the sky, rising in the east and setting in the west, assisted

to its apex by the gods and the warriors who died in battle. At dawn, it concluded its

downward journey, assisted by the women who died in childbirth, the *cihuateteo*.[25]

In *Nahuatl* theology, the sacrifice by the gods that permitted the sun to cross the sky

carried paramount significance for humanity. Realizing the cosmological magnitude of the

sacrifice—it ensured the continuation of the cosmos—the priests decreed that humans must

respond in kind. In that respect, maintenance of the universe—each night the sun passed

through the underworld on its way to the east, where it rose again each morning—became the

cosmological responsibility of all *Nahuatl* speaking people. The *Mexica* were convinced that

to fail to reciprocate the sacrifice of the gods in a like manner was to put the established

order, the continuation of the daily cosmic duality, in jeopardy. Hence, responsibility for the

continuation of the age was in the hands of the priests and people of the nation. From a

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[24] Anderson and Dibble, General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex: Book 7 – The Sun, Moon and Stars, and the Binding of the Years (Santa Fe N.M.: School of American Research, 1953), 7. Movement, *ollin*, is an indispensable concept in *Nahuatl* philosophy.

[25] In the *Nahuatl*-speaking world, childbirth was envisioned as a battle—to successfully give birth was equivalent to successfully taking a prisoner in battle; hence, dying in childbirth was associated with dying in battle.

religious perspective, a sacrifice of blood was required. With each ritual bloodletting, it was believed that humanity continued the day-night duality and escaped the cataclysmic end of the fifth age. Daily, this ritual reenacted on earth the cosmic battle that took place between the sun and the moon. Blood obtained from each ritual sacrifice fed the sun, allowing it to "defeat" the stars and the moon each morning on its daily return. In the early years of the empire, ritual sacrifice was made simply by drawing blood, the life-giving, vital source of the human body. Later, following the development by *Tlacaelel* of the ideologies associated with martial mysticism, human sacrifice became the standard method for offering the food of life to *Huitzilopochtli*. The sacrificial victim was given preeminent status in the *Mexica* empire. He or she was dressed to represent a god or goddess, led to the pinnacle of the temple, and ritualistically immolated. To die in such a way was considered to be a worthy death. As the *Mexica* empire expanded, the priests and emperors perceived that their grip on the people was becoming tenuous, hence, the need grew for more victims to sacrificially kill.[26] The way in which the ideology of martial mysticism became concretely manifest in the daily life of the *Mexica* resulted in a socially sanctioned ritual infused with a formal tribal meaning; this socially structured religious ritual was in many ways repulsive, if only because it was misunderstood, to the Spanish conquerors.

Concept of the Self in *Nahuatl* Cosmology

In the *Nahuatl* speaking world, each part of the self was associated with the 'cosmic body' and was conceived of as a duplicate of the entire universe. For example, the lower part

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[26] Interestingly, the warrior was not expected to kill the enemy during battle, only to take the enemy prisoner for purposes of sacrifice. That the Spanish would kill for apparently no purpose was not understood by the *Mexica* warriors or leaders.

of the body was associated with the female, the head was associated with the heavens, the

heart with earth, the liver with underworld, and the joints were conceived of as centers of

intense and dense life-force. These beliefs were consistent with a culture and society that

views all of creation as a living, breathing organism.

Since the time of the original cosmogonic creation, the earth's surface was considered

a sacred space,

> divided into parts governed by divine powers, with spatial orientations, colors,
> and symbols that infuse each space and place with a transcendent sense, a
> distinction that signifies much more than its material reality.[27]

The cosmos that emerged from this vision was perceived as a complement of contiguous and

permeable physical and spiritual realities. Centered around *Ometéotl*, the Creator who is with

creation, around creation, and through creation, it became impossible to fashion a world

where the spiritual and physical existed as independent elements, much less apart from

Ometéotl. Only the existence of a world that functioned as a complementary whole was

intelligible to the *Nahuatl* mind. Furthermore, it was imperative that the creative impulse of

the cosmos be considered an essential part of humanity. Hence, the world was visualized to

be with humanity, in humanity and through humanity. For that reason, according to *Nahuatl*

primeval creation myths, the first humans must have been formed from both celestial and

earthly matter. This dual creation from opposing forces required humanity to maintain

balance—internally and in private as well as externally and in public—in order to sustain the

relationship between created being and the cosmos. Faith in the ontological priority of

balance justified the state imposed ideology of moderation and prompted the community's

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[27] Florescano, 12.

conviction that imbalance was the cause of social and personal illness. The body—and by extension the communal understanding of self—reflected the perpetual duality, and was believed to exist in a state of constantly changing ebb and flow. The result was a human being that was understood to be contiguous with other humans and, furthermore, was porous and permeable. Elements in the surrounding world were able to enter into and affect the body and elements from within the body were thought to affect objects and people in the surrounding world.

There was no Christian concept of soul in the theology of the *Nahuatl* speaking people; rather there were believed to be three non-material animistic entities—the *tonalli*, the *teyolia* and the *ihiyotl*—which were a collective possession of the community. These animistic entities were not conceived to be merely spiritual entities; and yet, even though they were perceivable, they were not recognized as tangible or physical. It was believed that these three entities had privilege within a persons body but that they were not located solely in the physical body; that is, they were never conceived as fixed within the body. Instead, each of the animistic entities was identified with a certain part of the body. The *tonalli*, falsely connected with the soul by the early Spanish missionaries, was identified with and most often found in the head. The *tonalli* was capable of leaving the body during sleep or intense experience, such as sexual intercourse or fear. The *teyolia,* derived from *ollin,* movement, was closely linked with the heart and the memory. The heart was thought to be connected to the center of the cosmos; it was the place of memory, intellect and knowledge. The heart and the face, *ix-tli* and *yóllotl,* were what constituted the person. When the *teyolia* left the body death followed. The *ihiyotl* was connected to the breath and the liver. An entity in the liver

sent out emanations which were capable of causing illnesses in others.[28]

In the *Nahuatl* speaking world, sickness was comprehended as a physical or spiritual intrusion of an outside entity into the self. Because persons were believed to be porous and open to all dimensions of the cosmos, physical elements and spirits were capable of entering and exiting when the opportunity arose. A self—singular or plural—"incorporates solids and fluids in permanent flux, generally material 'airs' or volatile emanations as well as 'juices' and solid matter."[29] In this way other persons were capable of directly injuring a person by sending harmful or evil emanations or by casting a curse. Illness was thought to occur when harmful elements invaded the body and an abstract or immaterial entity somehow acquired material form. Sickness was also perceived in a social light. Mental, spiritual and physical health and well-being were the result of a balance between opposing forces. In accordance with the belief that humanity was intricately linked with the universe, the *Nahuatl* speaking people believed that immoral actions generated imbalance in the cosmos. All such actions would necessarily be punished by the gods. Good thoughts and avoidance of quarreling or aggressive acts between and amongst the citizens of the community were thought to preserve a right relation with the cosmos. In this way health was a community matter; just as a personal illness was harmful to the community, a social illness existed as one's own illness.

Understanding the body and its connection with the cosmos in this corporeal manner

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[28] The *teyolia* has been assumed to be the source of *mal de ojo*. This entity has also been misconstrued as the *nagual*, an animal guide utilized by shamans during their healing practices. See Timothy Knab, A War of Witches: A Journey into the Underworld of the Contemporary Aztecs (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1995).

[29] Marcos, "Sacred Earth"; and "Gender and Moral Precepts."

was the basis for healing rituals, performed by *curanderas,* in which sickness was extracted and sucked out of the body. When the immaterial sickness flowed to its polar opposite and took form, the *curandera* was capable of extracting the object in its material form. In their physical manifestation, objects sometimes resembled the "form" of insects, worms or snakes.[30] These objects represented the physical manifestation of the evil emanation and symbolized the illness as it was extracted from the body and becoming subject to destruction. The symbolic extraction may be a manifestation or materialization of the symbolic metaphor of community sin and illness prominent in *Nahuatl* cosmology. Even today, in many parts of México, disease is regarded as a punishment for sins, primarily sins against society.

Education in the Mexica World

The community's responsibility for the maintenance of the cosmos extended into the life of the *macehuale* as well as priestly and military life. Knowing how to act in the face of a living, breathing landscape of animate beings, where one's actions influenced the equilibrium of the cosmos, forced the *Mexica* to establish compulsory education for all people. Only the transmission of correct morals and values would ensure the preservation of the empire.

Becoming educated provided the common person with a means of successfully maneuvering the world and offered the possibility of overcoming a fate many considered to be predetermined. In fact, each person controlled their own destiny in the context of the community by responsibly making a complete face and honest heart. Children and youth were indoctrinated via compulsory education into the *Mexica* ideological construct that

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[30] See Knab; and Rudolfo Anaya, <u>Bless Me Ultima</u> (New York: Warner Books, 1972) for a description of a healing ritual.

demanded responsibility to the cosmos. Schools taught that proper actions were necessary to sustain the community; to act ethically was to assist in the continuation of the cosmos. The ethical mandate never promised that proper behavior would result in individual benefit or gain; rather, to behave in a proper manner was a function of the community. In this way each person shouldered responsibility for the maintenance of the cosmos. Moreover, while improper social behavior was punishable, sometimes severely, there was no connection between improper behavior and a theological category of sin. Since the *Nahuatl* language contains no word for sin, the concept of punishment for individual sins, as cultivated in the Western Christian world, was nonexistent. When a person acted immorally, or stepped out of line, their behavior placed the community in danger by threatening the balance of the cosmos. Wrong actions were those actions that upset the balance of the community or cosmos. And, because *Ometéotl* was physically and spiritually manifest in all parts of the world, all actions took place before the gods. The *Mexica* strongly believed that any unethical or immoral action would invoke the wrath of the gods and result in punishment to the entire community. In order to act morally, one must know what to think, what to do and what to say. Proper behavior and knowledge was best learned from ones elders. The role of the elders in the maintenance of society was to transmit proper knowledge to those who followed. As they traveled this earth, the elders

> went saying that on earth we travel, we live along a mountain peak. Over here there is an abyss, over there is an abyss. Wherever thou art to deviate, wherever thou art to go astray, there wilt thou fall, there wilt thou plunge into the deep . . . . It is necessary that thou always act with discretion in that which is done . . . .[31]

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[31] Anderson and Dibble, Book 6, 125.

In the process of transmitting the message that the earth was considered a slippery place to live—making a moral or ethical error placed the world in danger—the *tlamatinime* and elders established a place for themselves in society. They established the art of rhetoric, which was instilled in the young so that they might learn the proper words to use in the face of the ever observant cosmos. This prevented the uttering of words or phrases that might cause one to offend the cosmos.

<u>Educational Goals</u>

Educational goals and purposes in the *Mexica* world were established by the priests and teachers to correspond with the principles of maintenance and equilibrium with the life-sustaining forces of the cosmos. Because of the exaggerated sense of responsibility for the maintenance of the cosmos, it became necessary to ensure the transmission of correct knowledge from one generation to the next in the context of a fixed and rigorous curriculum. Because a properly educated populace was a community necessity, compulsory education was established for all young boys and girls. In such an environment, a well educated person was considered to be one who grasped and respected the symbolic force of words and was, therefore, well versed in the community narrative, excelled in rhetoric, performed the appropriate ritual and ceremonial obligations, and understood his or her relationship to the cosmos and to the community.

Proper education successfully developed the wise person, the master philosopher, into one who embodies the following:

> He is a light; a torch that doesn't smoke.
> Like a perforated mirror, a mirror full of holes on both sides.
> His is the ink of the black and the red, the codices give him this.

He himself is writing and wisdom.
He is the path, the truth for others.
He directs people and things, he is a guide in human affairs.
The true wise one is careful and guards the traditions.
His is the handed down wisdom, he teaches it and follows the truth.
Teacher of the truth, he doesn't cease to admonish.
He makes wise the countenance of the ignorant,
He gives others a face, he makes them develop.
He opens their ears and illuminates them.
He is teacher of the way, he gives to others their path.
On him others depend.
He places a mirror before others, he makes them cautious.
He makes a face appear on them.
He makes things right, he regulates their path,
He straightens and orders.
He applies his light over the world.
He knows what is above us and in the region of the dead.
He is a serious man.
Others are comforted by him, corrected and taught.
Thanks to him the peoples will is humanized and receives strict teaching.
He is a comfort to the heart, to the people, he helps, he heals, everyone he cures.[32]

The role of the wise person was to "make wise the faces of others" and to "humanize their

desires." This was the ultimate goal of life here on earth and the greatest joy a person might

expect—to find the answer to the mystery of life and suffering in this earthly existence.[33]

This description of the *Mexica tlamatinime* illustrates the esteem with which the people held

their wise leaders; it also suggests an extremely rigorous training in an advanced system of

schooling. In *Tenochtitlan* this education was available to all people regardless of their status

or position in society.

The goal of all education, religious and secular, was formation of the identity of the

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[32] Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, Códice Matritense del la Real Academia (*Nahuatl* texts of the Indian informants of Sahagún) (Madrid: Hauser y Menet, 1907), 8, fol. 118 v, r, quoted in León-Portilla, Aztec Thought, 115. See León-Portilla for a detailed exegesis of the above.

[33] León-Portilla, Aztec Thought, 115.

young person in the direction of, and with the intention of, responsibly placing that child into the life of the community. "Making-face, making-heart" (*in ix-tli in yollotl*) is the *Nahuatl difrasismo* for formation or construction of personhood. In this system, to educate, *neixtlamachiliztli*, meant to "give wisdom to the face." The words used for education were: *tlacahuapahualiztli*, the "art of strengthening or bringing up persons," *tlacazcaltia*, "the act of making persons grow," and *neixtlamachiliztli*, "the act of giving wisdom to the face." Wisdom in this context represents neither the personification of good nor an abstract ideological concept. The act of "giving wisdom to the face" was a concrete act that could only take place in the social arena and makes sense today only when understood in the context of integrating persons into the life and mission of the community. In the *Nahuatl* speaking world, wisdom and education were considered useful only if directed towards "creating and developing the cultural standards to be transmitted from generation to generation through . . . . a well-defined moral code, history and art."[34] In this setting, growth and strength "were achieved by gradually incorporating the child into work."[35]

Teachers were referred to as *te-ix-tlamachtiani,* teacher of people's faces, and were highly esteemed. A good teacher was characterized by traits similar to those described above, that is, a good teacher "never ceases to scold," "he opens ears," "he is the teacher of guides, he gives them their path, one depends on him . . . ." "He makes hearts strong, he comforts the people and takes care of everyone." A poor teacher, on the other hand, leads the people astray and is to be shunned.

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[34] León-Portilla, Aztec Thought, 134.

[35] Lopéz Austin, 289.

<u>Dedication of Children to the Place of Learning</u>

Immediately following a child's birth, a naming ritual followed. In addition, there

was a dedication ritual to a specific temple, "in order, it was said, that the baby would not

quickly die."[36] It was at this point that the parents decided whether or not the child would be

assigned to the priests house, the *calmécac*, where children were trained to become priests

and priestesses, or the *telpochcalli*, where children intended to follow the path of the warrior.

During the ceremonial ritual with food and drink, the parents, in the midst of a large

assembly, entreated the priests and teachers with the following:

> Here our lord, the lord of the near, of the nigh, hath placed you.
> Here you grasp, you are notified, that our lord hath given a jewel, a precious
> feather;
> a child hath arrived.
> And behold, in truth now he wisheth to be hardened.
> Already he is a jewel . . . .
> In your laps, in the cradle of your arms we place him
> For there are your sons; you instruct them, you educate them, you make eagle
> warriors, you make ocelot warriors.
> You instruct them for our mother, our father, *Tlaltecutli, Tonatiuh*[37]

When the child was accepted by the priests, he or she was returned to the *calmécac*,

painted black and a string of wooden beads called *Tlacopotli* were hung from the neck. It

was thought the soul of the child was joined to the beads, therefore, when the child was

returned to the parents the beads were left in the temple as a pledge. The priests then recited

to the high priest the following:

> O master, O our lord, O lord of the near, of the nigh, here is thy vassal, the

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[36] Anderson and Dibble, Book 6, 209. See also Berden and Anawalt, <u>Essential Codex Mendoza</u>. A description of the dedication of a newborn is found in folio 57r of <u>Codex Mendoza</u>.

[37] Anderson and Dibble, Book 3, 51.

commoner.
The mother, the father come bearing her, come dedicating her, come bringing her as an offering unto thee.
Thou dost not mistake her, for the poor thing is thy property. Receive her . . . .
Assign her to the penitent, the priestesses, those of cut hair.[38]

The child was then returned to the parents for a rigorous upbringing. The ages from infancy to early childhood were thought to be the time when a person was exposed to the greatest natural and supernatural dangers. Only via a strong education could a child be capable of becoming stronger and "step by step, be incorporated into the economic activities of the family and the community."[39] The role of the parents in *Tenochtitlan* was to raise and educate their children for the purpose of gaining "face" and "heart." In a real sense this was education for the purpose of identity formation and enculturation. Only at the age of twelve did children begin a formal education.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood instruction was carried out in the home; it began when the child was three years old. *Mexica* fathers and mothers raised their children with care, making sure the children knew their responsibilities and mastered necessary life skills. Children learned early in life what was expected to be their role in the cosmos—to learn discipline and to value work. Strength and self control were emphasized as ideals to which children should aspire. For example, food was supplied in small portions to teach the importance of self-discipline. Additionally, children learned the uses of household implements and performed minor household duties, such as carrying wood and water. These physical lessons and chores also

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[38] Anderson and Dibble, Book 6, 210.

[39] Lopéz Austin, 286.

conveyed practical and spiritual lessons, lessons that were emphasized by the use of frequently repeated rhetoric and advice. By age four, children were trained to contribute to the household via the chores they performed. Mothers assumed responsibility for teaching girls to perform their duties, such as weaving and sweeping, inside the house. Fathers assumed the role of teacher for the boys; young boys were introduced to work outside the house. In addition to differentiation of domain, clothing was differentiated at this age. From ages five through seven, parents acted as overseers of their children's household activities. By this age, the teaching of basic activities and rituals was considered finished and the child set out to perfect his or her daily duties and rituals. Young girls perfected their spinning techniques and young boys perfected fishing and other duties in the domain outside the home.

Admonition was the chief method of discipline up to eight years. Specific instructions given to *Mexica* children are recounted by Sahagún in his section on "Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy" (Book 6). Fathers frequently admonished their sons "regarding prudence in public, and how to sleep, to drink, to eat, to talk, and how to dress."[40] These instructions warn children about excessive sleep, correct posture, moderate speech, staring (especially at the wife of another), gossip, cleanliness, the vices of gambling and theft, and drinking. Warnings from parents were considered words to live by, "worthy of being guarded" because they came to the people from their forefathers, the white headed ones, that they could "later take them to heart."[41] Sahagún includes words that also compelled parents to punish their children when they misbehaved; on occasion the punishment was painful.

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[40] Anderson and Dibble, Book 6, 121.

[41] Ibid., Book 6, 121- 25

One form of punishment obliged the parents to restrain their child over burning chile peppers and force them to inhale the pepper smoke. After the age of eight, stricter punishments awaited the disobedient child. Discipline ranged from pricking the hand with a maguey spine to requiring the child to lay bound and naked out of doors in the night air.

During adolescence, previously established gender roles were more strictly followed. Young girls perfected the art of cooking at age twelve while the young boys perfected hunting and other forms of food gathering. All young girls of noble lineage spent a year at age twelve or thirteen assisting in the temple and many became professional priestesses. In addition to significant influence behind the scenes, women also "participated in political life in significant ways."[42] Specific gender roles were not understood as restrictions on either the boy or the girl, but were viewed as part of the respective domain of either gender. Sylvia Marcos disputes the idea that women took little direct part in public life and suggests that there existed an underlying ideology of gender balance. And, while it might be easy to label their training simply a preparation for marriage, young girls and boys were treated as equals. For example, weaving, although perceived as a means of sustenance, was also a means of production; woven cloth was used as a means of exchange and for purchasing products.

The *Cuicacalli*

Between the ages of twelve and fourteen, children attended a *cuicacalli*, literally the "house of songs," where instruction in ritual singing and dancing occurred. The *cuicacalli* was usually located adjacent to the temples. "They were large buildings, elaborately

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[42] Marcos, "Gender and Moral Precepts," 60.

decorated, with rooms surrounded by and open courtyard where dances were performed."[43]
Here children were charged with "the sweeping, or with dancing and song—with all which
was concerned with the performance of penances."[44] Again, the ritual singing, dancing and
domestic responsibilities taught to the children were not simply associated with gender roles
or functional chores. For instance, sweeping was not merely concerned with cleaning;
sweeping also carried the ritual and metaphorical meaning of opening the way for the gods to
enter this world.

Attendance and religious and moral indoctrination at the *cuicacalli* were well
regulated. Prior to instruction, which began an hour before sunset, students were assembled
in their local *barrio* by the elderly men and women and escorted to the school. Under the
guidance of the instructors—usually the master of youths from the *telpochcalli*—the children
danced and sang "well into the night."[45] Songs and dances served the dual purpose of
instructing children in the correct ritual and ceremonial practices as well as transmitting the
orthodox religious beliefs of the elders. They traditionally praised the Creator, told of life
and death and the relationship between god and humanity, and conveyed the oral history of
the *Mexica*. Singing and dancing concluded well after the "priests blew the shell trumpet."[46]
At that point the younger children returned to their homes while the older boys and girls,
already attending the *telpochcalli*, returned to their academies to sleep.

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[43] Berden and Anawalt, 166.

[44] Anderson and Dibble, General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex: Book 8 – Kings and Lords (Santa Fe N.M.: School of American Research, 1979), 72.

[45] Sahagún, Book 8, 43.

[46] Ibid.

The *Telpochcalli* and *Calmécac*

By virtue of a decree made by *Motecuhzoma* I, all sectors of the kingdom were to build and maintain schools for children, "where they will learn religion and correct comportment."[47] At the age of fifteen, children entered their respective schools—either the *telpochcalli* or the *calmécac*—and were initiated into the strict and harsh routine of work discipline, and abstinence. The *tlamatinime* corrected and chastised, taught each person their role in the cosmos, trained them in the priestly rites, taught them how to play the *teponaztli*, the "wooden drum," and how to watch the stars to sound the hour. Much time and attention was placed on the transmission of proper values and morals, "taking care that they are not idle and do not lose their time." Furthermore, as they matured, all were expected to know their place in society.

The children of the *macehualtin* (literally those who are deserving or "workers": tradespeople, peasants, and builders) attended a local, more secular oriented school—the *telpochcalli*. *Telpochcalli*, essentially a military school, were found in every sector of the city. The *telpochcalli* was where students were indoctrinated into the ideology of the state, taught basic occupational skills, the elements of warfare, and good citizenship. Each child also mastered the ritual and ceremonial songs and dances as well as the fundamentals of their history, myths and popular religious practices.[48] In the *telpochcalli*, boys received intensive training in agriculture and other trades. Furthermore, each boy was disciplined in the art of

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[47] "They are to penance, lead hard lives, live with strict morality, practice for warfare, do physical work, fast, endure disciplinary measures, draw blood . . . and keep watch at night." Durán, 210.

[48] Berden and Anawalt, 166.

warfare and was expected to participate in battles from very early in their training. Such uncompromising indoctrination into the martial ideology of the state generated great rivalry between the schools, often leading to conflict. In addition to schooling, all boys were required to work on their family's land. Many youth performed community services devoted to public works where they "undertook the preparation of mud for adobe, walls, agricultural land, canals."[49] Some also performed such services as repairing streets and bridges or maintaining public areas. Physical discipline, although harsh by contemporary standards, was much less severe than in the *calmécac* where young pupils were frequently punished with maguey spines or other sorts of bloodletting.

In the *calmécac* all students learned,

> arts, military, religious, mechanical and astrological, which gave them knowledge of the stars. For this they possessed large beautiful books, painted in hieroglyphs, dealing with all these arts, and these books were used for teaching. There were also native books of law and theology for didactic purposes.[50]

Although both schools offered extensive education, the education students obtained in the *calmécac* was believed to be superior to the education obtained in the *telpochalli* because it focused more on intellectual endeavors and the loftiest ideals of *Nahuatl* philosophy. Being the more rigorous of the two, children who were educated in the *calmécac* were selected for roles in government or with the imperial court. Therefore, the *calmécac* system was essential to the maintenance of the empire.

The *calmécac* was run by priests and sages—the keepers of the wisdom. There were

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[49] Anderson and Dibble, Book 3, 56.

[50] Ibid., 61

a number of these schools in *Tenochtitlan*, and, whereas *Quetzalcoatl* was considered to be the patron of the *calmécac*, each school was associated with a different deity. Although it was open to children of all classes, in general, children of the "ruler, nobleman, lord or anyone who was rich" were dedicated to the *calmécac*.[51] When a *macehualtin* child was permitted to attend a *calmécac,* emphasis was placed on the learning of knowledge to prepare them for advanced careers.

Both boys and girls were welcome at the *calmécac*, however, they were kept segregated from one another. When a young boy was assigned to the *calmécac*, the purpose was "to be a penitent, to live cleanly, to live peacefully, to live chastely, to abstain from vice and filth." For a young girl, the purpose was "to live chastely, she would not come in touch with vice or filth, she would live among the continent, the virgins."[52] All children, under strict priestly guidance, were expected to learn to live prudently, to govern, and to understand the history and ways of their elders.

Curriculum

The accumulating wisdom cultivated and nurtured by life of the community was the content of the curriculum.[53] This wisdom, derived from the enlightened past of the community, was passed on from elders to learners in the context of community life. In the *Mexica* world, curriculum, although personal in scope, was meaningful only when it was

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[51] Diego Durán, cited in Berden and Anawalt, 166.

[52] Anderson and Dibble, Book 6, 121- 25. See also Book 8, chap. 13, 20.

[53] Accumulating wisdom is the term given to curriculum derived from the wisdom of one's elders. See Mary Elizabeth Moore, Education for Continuity and Change: A New Model for Christian Religious Education (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

extracted from the tangible earth nearby. The subjects taught in the *calmécac* were believed to contribute to the maintenance and sustenance of the world and therefore were deeply established in the curriculum. The curriculum included writing, law, architecture, history, mathematics, astronomy, poetry, agriculture, and rhetoric. In addition, pupils practiced rigorous religious duties.

A characteristic common to most oral cultures is the emphasis placed on proper use of words and honest expression. In the *Mexica* world, "he who spoke not well, they then drew blood with maguey spines."[54] Hence, rhetoric and clear oral expression was rewarded in the *calmécac*. Mastering these aptitudes was considered equally important to learning the sciences and memorizing doctrine. To ensure proper discourse, students studied and memorized the primary components and resources of education found at their schools: including the gods' songs inscribed in books, the teaching of the count of days, the book of dreams, and the book of years. These ancient treatises were the resources which contained the wisdom of the elders and the ideological dogma of the state. To grasp these sources enabled a student to advance in his or her studies. These expositions, called *heuhuetlatolli*, include moral precepts and sayings that prescribe proper and expected behavior and responsibilities. They were transcribed into *Nahuatl* over a course of many years and can be found in Book six of Sahagún's corpus of work.

On a typical day, students arose while still dark to begin their chores. Depending on their age, at sunrise they went into the woods to collect maguey spines or wood, which they carried back to the school on their backs. These branches were used for light, heat or

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[54] Anderson and Dibble, Book 3, see pages 65 - 67.

sacrifices. In the evening they performed their penances and other "godly obligations." At midnight, they all arose to pray.

Life in the *calmécac* was designed to increase wisdom and develop discipline and self-control; consequently, the rules were strict and the work was harsh. Failure to follow the preordained schedule resulted in punishment by drawing blood from the ears, flanks or thighs. Serious disobedience—such as getting drunk with *pulque* or cavorting with older women—many times resulted in death by hanging or stoning.

Conclusion

In *Tenochtitlan*, education meant to "give wisdom to the face." A wise person maintained the moral, ethical and legal regulations of the community and the creator. To live in such a manner was essential for the preservation of the empire and, by extension, the entire cosmos. As a means of indoctrinating people into the national ideology and ensuring the maintenance of the cosmos, formal schooling was made compulsory. The purpose of a formal education was to fashion persons with the intention of placing them in a specific role in the life of the community. Every citizen was expected to practice rigorous discipline, to become well versed in the community narrative and to understand his or her relationship to the cosmos and to the community. In the end, every person, while dependent upon the whims of the gods and the demands of the state, controlled his or her own destiny in the context of the community by choosing to make a complete and honest face and heart.

Chapter 5 will disclose the threads of education and philosophy as they were cultivated in a matrix of popular faith, religiosity and healing practices amongst the native cultures of México after the conquest. It will be shown that, regardless of the external system

imposed on the people, the underlying framework of being remained grounded in ancient

categories—codices sustained in the hearts and minds of the modern day descendants of the

Nahuatl speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica.

CHAPTER 5

The Emergence and Development of Popular Resistance

In his work México Profundo, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla demonstrates a cultural

continuity between the civilization nurtured by the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient

Mesoamerica and contemporary México.[1] The task of this chapter is to demonstrate that a

similar continuity exists between the cultural practices of the people of ancient Mesoamerica

and the beliefs and practices observed in the culture of contemporary *mestizos/as* living in

southern California. To achieve this goal, I will elucidate threads of cosmology and folk

philosophy as *mestizos/as* have cultivated them within the related matrices of popular

wisdom, folk religiosity and healing practices. Together, these practices continue to shape

and define the indigenous and *mestizo/a* cultures of México and the southwestern United

States. I will show that significant elements of ancient Mesoamerican culture survive to this

day and that each of the cultural spheres—popular wisdom, popular religiosity and healing

practices—displays a type of cultural resiliency that results in cultural resistance as a means

of rebellion against conformity to the authority of the conqueror.

The first part of the chapter will describe the role education played in the process of

evangelization and acculturation of the indigenous people of the continent after the conquest.

Initial resistance was followed by a period of acquiescence to the system of education

imposed by the Spaniards in the early sixteenth century. Eventually, however, an unfolding

resistance was generated in communities made up of the descendants of the defeated natives

in and around central México. Theological debates concerning the humanity of the newly

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[1] Bonfil Batalla, ibid.

conquered people that ensued amongst the local clergy and in Spain contributed to the growing unrest.

The second part of the Chapter will demonstrate that the social consequences of the conquest contributed to an environment that nurtured a growing cultural resistance transmitted via underground structures of religious beliefs, popular wisdom and healing rituals. In México, resistance to the imposition of an outside dominant culture mounted as the indigenous native and their half-breed *mestizo/a* children reacted to the loss of their historical memory; it continued even after the Spanish were ultimately defeated in 1821. As this newly constituted hybrid culture made the transition from a primary oral to a residually oral culture, its rituals and practices—and the wisdom transmitted through them—were relegated to the periphery of civic life. In private and out of sight of the priests and leaders, however, resistance was handed down from parent to child, one generation to the next, concealed within a matrix that preserved an ancient understanding of the sacred and the profane. The transmission of this wisdom, and the identity it embraced, was conveyed predominately through the domains of popular religion and popular healing rituals—two spheres of life and thought that were inextricably linked and intimately inseparable. These hidden spheres became the locus of a new, concealed resistance, impenetrable by the conqueror. The development of this resistance was grounded in the historical experiences of the people; it was popular in origin and never planned.

Finally, to demonstrate the continued influence upon the community made up of the modern day descendants of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica, I will evaluate modern day rituals, such as *Dia de los muertos*; beliefs, such as the veneration of *la*

Virgen de Guadalupe; and healing practices. Each of these religious and healing rituals continue to be practiced by Mexican immigrants and their children. The existence of these rituals suggests a sustained thread of cultural resistance and resilience whose origins precede the conquest of México. It is quite likely that similar philosophical categories continue to shape the social reality of the contemporary Chicano/a. If this is so, then it can be established that the philosophical framework out of which the Chicano/a operates is grounded in an assumption of humanity centered on the indigenous understanding of a dual creator (*Ometéotl*), an organic understanding of one's relationship to the community and cosmos (*tonal*), and resonance with the cosmos experienced as movement (*ollin*). Each of these philosophical categories were derived from *Nahuatl* understandings of a unified cosmos created by, infused with and sustained by a creator-god capable of multiple manifestations.

The Conquest of the *Mexica*

> *El 13 de agosto de 1521*
> *heroicamente defendido por Cuauhtémoc*
> *cayó Tlaltelolco en poder de Hernán Cortés.*
> *No fue victoria ni derrota*
> *fue el doloroso nacimiento del pueblo mestizo*
> *que es el México de hoy*

(On August 13, 1521, the city of *Tlaltelolco*, despite a heroic defense by *Cuahtémoc*, was taken by Hernán Cortés. It was neither a victory nor defeat but the sorrowful birth of the *mestizo* people who are the Mexican nation of today.)

"Insecure" is the modern-day label that best describes the relationship of the *Mexica* to their empire. From a contemporary perspective, the *Mexica* derived an elaborate system of worship and sacrifice designed to appease the gods and guarantee the continuation of their empire. From a perspective common to oral societies, the *Mexica* constructed their vision of

society based upon a perception of time as cyclical and repetitive. From this point-of-view, humanity was capable of fulfilling its destiny within each cycle only in relation to the cycles of the universe. Every fifty-two years marked the end of a complete cosmic cycle and the beginning of a new cycle. The ensuing cycle would begin only if the creator deemed the people worthy. Everything known to the *Mexica*—the continuation of their empire, their way of life, and their existence as a people—depended on the ability of the community to satisfy the will of the creator. For example, even when defeat was imminent, the chief priests advised *Cuauhtémoc* not to surrender to the Spanish. They warned him that, "in only four days we shall have completed the period of eighty days. It may be the will of *Huitzilopochtli* that nothing further shall happen to us."[2] It was into this climate that the Spanish arrived.

Hernán Cortés and six hundred soldiers landed off the Tabasco coast of México on Good Friday in the year 1519. The year 1519 corresponded to the year *Ce Acatl* in the *Nahuatl* calendar; this was the date-name of the god *Quetzalcoatl*, who, according to a revisionist *Chichimeca* and *Tolteca* prophecy, would return from banishment in the East to reestablish his ancient empire. Cortés, thought to be a representative of this priestly god or one of his descendants, reinforced this idea by claiming to pay allegiance to an imperial figure in a far away land over the sea. Initially, the *Mexica* conceded to Cortés and allowed him full access to the imperial palace and its services. Subsequently, upon realizing their mistake, the *Mexica* warriors denounced the Spanish soldiers and late one night drove them off their island empire, a night referred to by the Spanish as "*el noche triste*." Returning with

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[2] León-Portilla, Broken Spears, 140. See León-Portilla for a complete account of the conquest of México from the *Mexica* perspective.

reinforcements, Cortés eventually overcame the city of *Tenochtitlan* and, in 1521, destroyed all visible traces of the *Mexica* empire. During the next seventy-five years, ninety-five percent of the indigenous people were destroyed. Tzvetan Todorov estimates that the indigenous population of México alone decreased from 25 million in 1521, to less than 1 million in 1600.

> If the word genocide has ever been applied to a situation with some accuracy, this is here the case. It constitutes a record not only in relative terms (a destruction on the order of 90 percent or more), but also in absolute terms, since we are speaking of a population diminution estimated at 70 million human lives. None of the great massacres of the twentieth century can be compared to this hecatomb.[3]

The destruction of lives was insignificant compared to the destruction of the will and ethos of the newly conquered people. From the perspective of the vanquished, the conquest befell them "like a cataclysm that dislocated the bases on which were seated their relations with the gods, the cosmos, and temporal happening."[4] With little warning, the energy that maintained the power of the *Ometéotl* ran out; and when they realized that "our god has died" (*tel ca tetu in omicque*—literally, "our world has died"), the peoples' singular response was, "Allow us then to die! Let us perish now, since our gods are already dead."[5] For of what use was this life with no world? Their flourishing civilization, dependent upon the will of the one who existed *in tloque in nahuaque,* could survive no longer without the animation

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[3] Todorov, 133. 70 million refers to the number of lives lost in the Americas.

[4] Florescano, 100.

[5] Walter Lehmann, trans. Colloquies and Christian Doctrine with which the Twelve Friars of Saint Francis Sent by Pope Adrian VI and Emperor Charles V Converted the Indians of New Spain, in the Mexican and Spanish Languages, by Bernardino de Sahagún (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1949), cited in León-Portilla, Aztec Thought and Culture, 63. The *Nahuatl* text was recorded in 1524, three years following the destruction of *Tenochtitlan.*

provided by the creator god. The *Nahuatl* model of creation and foundation for life was destroyed by the conqueror, felled forever, and on its ruins now resided the god of the Spanish—the god of the Christians. The new god eventually inflicted death, disease, war and poverty upon a people and land that once prospered. In the words of the unlucky survivors, "nothing but flowers and songs of sorrow are left in *México* and *Tlateloco*, where once we saw warriors and wise men."[6]

That the Spaniards were unable to comprehend the depth of the loss felt by the natives is evident from an evaluation of the historical record. Rather than allowing the natives to integrate their indigenous world view with European philosophical categories, the Spanish chose instead to dominate through a process of cultural hegemony. The evangelization, rigorous indoctrination and ensuing domination and subjugation of the survivors—violent, unequal and unilateral—was effected by the Spanish with no thought given to the consequences it would have on mind frame or spirit of the people.

After the conquest, there were very few serious dialogues between the dominant conquering population and the original inhabitants or their offspring, the *mestizos/as*. The one dialogue that is recorded by Bernardino de Sahagún, the Colloquies and Christian Doctrine with which the Twelve Friars of Saint Francis Sent by Pope Adrian VI and Emperor Charles V Converted the Indians of New Spain, in the Mexican and Spanish Languages, describes an attempted dialogue between twelve Franciscan friars and the few remaining

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[6] Translated from the *Cantares Mexicanos*, quoted in León-Portilla, Broken Spears, 149. The *Cantares Mexicanos* date from 1523, and are the oldest native accounts of the conquest. They were composed by the *cuicapicque*, the *Nahuatl* speaking poets. This particular composition is recorded as Song 13, *Huexotzincan piece,* in Bierhorst, Cantares Mexicanos, 151.

tlamatinime three years following the fall of *Tenochtitlan*. In this dialogue there is no indication that the Christian clerics seriously attempted to understand the *tlamatinime*. Sensing the resistance of the Friars to engage in dialogue, the *Mexica* leaders attempted to convince them of the mutual benefits of arriving at an understanding. In addition to revealing their history, their link with tradition and the deepest theological insights of their religion, the *Nahuatl* speaking *talmatinime* also tried in vain to establish for the Spanish Clerics the veracity of their gods, rituals and practices.

> You said that we know not
> the Lord of the Close Vicinity (*in tloque in nahuaque*)
> to Whom the heavens and the earth belong.
> You said that our Gods are not true gods.
> New words are these that you speak;
> because of them we are disturbed,
> because of them we are troubled. . . .
>
> It was the doctrine of the elders that there is life because of the gods;
> with their sacrifice, they gave us life.
> In what manner? When? Where?
> When there was still darkness.
>
> It was their doctrine that they [the gods] provide our subsistence,
> all that we eat and drink,
> that which maintains life: corn, beans, amaranth, sage.
> To them we pray for water, for rain which nourish things on earth.
>
> For a long time has it been;
> it was there at Tula,
> it was there at Huapalcalco,
> it was there at Xuchatlapan,
> it was there at Tlamohuancan,
> it was there at Yohuallichan,
> it was there at Teotihuacán. . . .
>
> And now, are we to destroy
> the ancient order of life?

We know on Whom life is dependent;
on Whom the perpetuation of the race depends;
by Whom begetting is determined;
by Whom growth is made possible;
how it is that one must invoke;
how it is that one must pray. . . .

Hear, oh Lords,
do nothing to our people that will bring misfortune upon them,
that will cause them to perish. . . .

We cannot be tranquil, and yet we certainly do not believe;
we do not accept your teachings as truth,
even though this may offend you.[7]

The contrast between the Christian beliefs and the *Mexica* practices offered a unique problem to the Catholic priests and *Nahuatl* speaking people alike. Not accepting the Christian "teachings as truth," the *Mexica tlamatinime,* firmly, yet modestly, argued that the people should be allowed to preserve their religious beliefs in conjunction with the new religious beliefs brought by the friars—they sought a politically enforced syncretism.[8]

Unable to comprehend why they were required to give up their gods, categories of thought and rituals, the *Mexica* interpreted the loss of their old customs as a death of their entire way of life. Expecting the Spanish to understand, the Catholic friars instead answered by explaining the mysteries of the faith and the need for conversion. Nowhere in the

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[7] Lehman, Colloquies, 100-106, quoted in León-Portilla, Aztec Thought and Culture, 63-66.

[8] Grounded in *Nahuatl* categories of thought and *Mexica* political ideology, the *tlamatinime* knew that the people would be comfortable combining the conquerors belief system with their own. Historically, *Mexica* religious beliefs and practices incorporated numerous neighboring beliefs and practices; as a people, the *Mexica* were inherently able to incorporate other systems into their own—to be syncretic. Diego Duran reports that *Motecuhzoma* II, aware of the social ramifications of this holistic thinking, constructed the Temple of *Coatlan*—the "Temple of Many Gods—where "all the gods revered in the country could be adored." Doris Heyden, trans., The History of the Indies of New Spain, by Diego Durán, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 431.

historical record of the encounter was a question that was asked by the *tlamatinime* directly answered by the friars. In the end, authentic communication between the two groups of wise men was unable to take place. With no understanding of the nature of the difference in the minds of either group, the *Mexica* request to maintain their old traditions was unequivocally rejected.

Ultimately, Spanish conquistadors forcibly seized and raped the native women and killed or forced into slavery the men. This annihilation was accomplished despite the objections of Europeans who favored a more gentle persuasion of the native, including education, as a means of conversion. The Catholic Church was instrumental in sanctioning the illicit union of the Spaniards with the native women. Unfortunately, the Church and the political leaders had no knowledge of, connection with, or compassion for the people. They manipulated and named them according to their dated medieval categories and treated them strictly as objects, others to be exploited and used. This deficiency was clear to the natives, whose cognitive paradigms and understandings of the world offered them no way of responding. Eventually, sadness and despair became their sentiment. The constant struggle and suffering were a further sign to the indigenous people that their gods had abandoned them.

> Only by the crazy time, by the crazy priests, was it that sadness entered us, that
> Christianity entered us. Because the very Christian arrived here with the true God;
> but that was the beginning of our misery, the beginning of tribute, the beginning
> of begging, the reason for the hidden discord to reveal itself, the beginning of
> fights with firearms, the beginning of the outrages, the beginning of the
> plundering of everyone, the beginning of slavery by debt, the beginning of debts
> stuck on one's back, the beginning of the continuous struggle, the beginning of

suffering. It was the beginning of the work of the Spaniards and the priests.[9]

By virtue of their narrow-minded truths, harsh discipline and destructive presence, the Spanish clerics—even in those places where schools made instruction in the faith readily available—taught the indigenous people one truth: Any time the Spanish advanced, the sequence of event was, "conquest, friars, persecution of the 'sorcerers,' removal of idolatry, *encomienda*, slavery, and loss of autonomy."[10]

Education and Evangelization in the New World

From the outset, the conquest of the Americas entangled the indigenous people of the continent between the many factions which arose on either side of the conflict over the desire to evangelize and educate the native and the demand for massive amounts of cheap labor. Hernan Cortés, who claimed to be genuinely concerned for the soul of the native, became the first evangelist on México when he baptized over a thousand natives prior to destroying the *Mexica* capital city of *Tenochtitlan* in 1521.[11]

> Cortés was very grateful for the attentions shown him by *Ixtlilxochitl* and his brothers; he wished to repay their kindness by teaching them the law of God, with the help of his interpreter Aguilar. The brothers and a number of the other lords gathered to hear him, and he told them that the emperor of the Christians had sent him here, so far away, in order that he might instruct them in the law of Christ. He explained the mystery of the Creation and the Fall, the mystery of the Trinity and the Incarnation and the mystery of the Passion and the Resurrection. Then he drew out a crucifix and held it up. The Christians all knelt, and *Ixtlilxochitl* and the

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[9] Méndez Bolio, El libro de Chilam Balam de Cambial, 29-30, cited in Florescano, 101.

[10] Florescano, 106.

[11] It was reported that Cortés was offered enough wealth "to sink a ship. But the good Hernán Cortés, like a true Christian, was only interested in saving souls!" Duran, History, 533.

other lords knelt with them.[12]

Cortés later pleaded with King Charles to send Franciscan missionaries to the new world.

This was his way of repaying the native people for their kindness. Previously, Queen Isabella

of Spain, who indicated that her first concern was the "conversion of the natives in the new

land," wrote to the governor on Hispaniola in 1503, indicating her wishes that both education

and the desire for labor be fulfilled.

> In order that the Christians of the said island . . . may not lack people to work their holdings for their maintenance, and may be able to take out what gold there is on the island . . . and because we desire that the said Indians be converted to our Holy Catholic Faith and taught in its doctrines; and because this can better be done by having the Indians living in community with the Christians of the island, and by having them go among them and associate with them, by which means they will help each other to cultivate and settle and increase the fruits of the island and take the gold which may be there and bring profit to my kingdom and subjects.
>
> Beginning from the day you receive my letter you will compel and force the said Indians to associate with the Christians of the island and to work on their buildings . . . . and so that on feast days and such days as you think proper they may be gathered to hear and be taught in matters of the Faith . . . . This the Indians shall perform as free people, which they are, and not as slaves. And see to it that the said Indians are well treated, those who become Christians better than the others.[13]

Isabella's decree resulted in the establishment of the system known as the

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[12] León-Portilla, Broken Spears, 58. The statement made by Cortés ("the emperor of the Christians had sent him here, . . .") is similar to that known as the *requerimiento*. Carried by all Spanish conquerors beginning in 1514, it was read in Spanish to the natives by the conqueror. It related how God, "the creator and lord of mankind had delegated His authority on earth to the pope and the pope in turn had donated the Americas to Charles, the King of Spain." All people in the new land were to consent to have the Catholic faith preached to them. If any refused, the conqueror would forcefully enter the country. See John L. Kessell, Kiva, Cross, and Crown: The Pecos Indians and New Mexico 1540-1840 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 14f.

[13] Letter of Queen Isabella to Ovando, 20 Dec. 1503, in H. McKennie Goodpasture, Cross and Sword: An Eyewitness History of Christianity in Latin America (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989), 8. Slavery was later prohibited on the new continent under the New Laws of 1542.

Encomienda. Under this system, land in each community was divided and granted to a Spanish nobleman who became responsible for the supervision and education of the community. Natives living on the land were made subject to the laws and rules of the *encomiendero*—each of whom derived their own unique laws and standards. This method of controlling the people had been practiced in the Americas for over two decades prior to its institution in México. The net effect of the *Encomienda* was the further detachment of the people from their previous lives.[14] Pope Alexander VI, lending his full support to Isabella's royal proclamation, commissioned the king to "bring to the worship of our Redeemer and the profession of the Catholic faith their residents and inhabitants . . . ."[15] Obediently, Columbus took a large fleet which included among the passengers the twelve Franciscan friars who arrived in México in 1524.

> When he arrived in the Caribbean, he installed them with a group of other passengers on the island of Hispaniola (Dominican Republic and Haiti). For the next twenty-five years, the island was to be the center of the Spanish conquests and church life, and from it would radiate all Spanish administration and expansion.[16]

In reality, however, even before the conquest of México, no substantial measures

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[14] Florescano comments that "the process that the friars began with the removal of the ancient idolatry and the imposition of Christianity was completed by the congregation of towns [into *encomienderos*], because in these reductions, the ancient fortifying and revitalizing past was progressively cut off from the present and replaced by a new social and cultural situation in which remainders of the past were combined with European traditions and customs. A new identity and new forms of social solidarity were formed in the congregations around the communal lands and the Christian church, which was erected in the middle of town. The majority of the hundreds of towns congregated were baptized with the name of a Christian saint, which was placed before the old indigenous name. In many of these towns, the Christian foundation was mixed with traditional indigenous practices." Florescano, 114.

[15] Goodpasture, 5. From a Papal Bull delivered in 1493, when the western isles were granted by the Pope to Spain.

[16] Ibid.

were taken for the education or conversion of the indigenous people. The Queen's order, according to Bartolomé de las Casas, "was difficult or impossible and not designed to bring Indians to the Faith; indeed, it was pernicious and deadly and designed to destroy all Indians."[17] This objection was expressed even stronger by the Dominican, Antonio Montesinos, in a sermon preached in 1511, on the island of Hispaniola:

> And what care do you take that they receive religious instruction and come to know their God and creator, or that they be baptized, hear mass, or observe holidays and Sundays? Are they not men? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not bound to love them as you love yourselves? How can you lie in such profound and lethargic slumber? Be sure that in your present state you can no more be saved than the Moors of Turks who do not have and do not want the faith of Jesus Christ.[18]

In the end, education of the native was not accomplished and large populations of people were simply herded into an area easier to administer and control. Ultimately, the cost of salvation was the outward destruction of the indigenous world. The Spanish clerics and soldiers, who set out to annihilate all connection with the wisdom and knowledge of the past, traveled from city to city, to every temple, and, in the name of the Christian god, destroyed all things indigenous. Written historical accounts were burned; alters, icons and pictures were demolished; and rituals and traditions were suppressed. In the eyes of the conqueror, conversion must be total: no individual, no fraction of an individual, no practice, however trivial it may seem, must escape. According to the Dominican Diego Durán, the natives

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[17] Bartolomé de las Casas, History of the Indies, trans. and ed. Andree Collard (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 109, quoted in Goodpasture, 10.

[18] Las Casas, História de las Indias (México, 1951), 441-42, quoted in Goodpasture, 12. With the preaching of Montesinos' sermon, the indigenous people gained a number of outspoken advocates for their rights. Included in that group was Bartolomé de las Casas.

will never find God until the roots have been torn out, together with that which smacks of the ancestral religion. . . . [W]e are trying earnestly to remove the memory of Amalech . . . . One must not be content . . . with an all too frequent acceptance of the external rites of Christianity, as monkeys would perform them (1,17).

We salve our consciences with the appearance of 'Christians' which the Indians feign for us. Though not all the people follow these customs, it is enough that there is a single man with the ancient ideas in a village to do much harm(1,3).[19]

The conquest and colonization of these new lands was now presented by the military and religious elite as a missionary endeavor. Since the political justification for the conquest rested in its perception as a means of evangelization of the Americas—a way to convert these regions to the holy faith—it became imperative that education commence. Within three years of the fall of *Tenochtitlan*, the twelve friars of the order of St. Francis, brought to the New World by Columbus, arrived in México. Two years later the Dominicans arrived; finally, twelve years after the conquest, friars from the order of St. Augustine arrived. Each of these groups of Christian missionaries took up the task of evangelization, education and conversion with great zeal. As this occurred, the educational practices of the *Mexica* were replaced by the practices of the church school. The evangelization, education and salvation of the heathen by their baptism and incorporation into the church, soon became the ostensible reason for Spain's involvement in the Americas. Schools and centers of learning were established in México within a decade of the fall of *Tenochtitlan*.

Can the Indigenous Native Be Educated?

Following the conquest of *Tenochtitlan*, the indigenous natives were perceived by the

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[19] Diego Durán, Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y Islas de la Tierra Firme (Book of the gods and rites and the ancient calendar) (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), cited in Todorov, 202, 204.

Spanish conquerors as 'other-as-object' corresponding to their agenda of domination and cultural hegemony. Culturally, the conqueror was unable to accept the indigenous people of the American continent as subjects of their own history. A factor that contributed to this situation was the prevailing cultural and theological anthropology that existed in sixteenth century Europe. In general, persons outside the known world were unrecognized—or recognized as 'barbarian'—and therefore construed not as subjects, but as 'others-as-object' with limited rights. Despite the Spaniard's perspective, the defeated native continued to view themselves as 'other-as-subject' as an act of resistance as well as a means of maintaining community and cultural self-identity.

Fifteen years after the fall of México, in 1536, the Papal Bull *Sublimis Deus*, a decree proclaimed by Pope Paul III, declared that the indigenous native inhabitants of the Americas were fully human and not to be barred from the Eucharist. Nevertheless, discussions concerning the nature of their humanity continued. The issue was debated before the Spanish Crown by Francisco de Vitoria, who argued that the conquered were human beings only *in potentia*, not fully; Bartolomé de las Casas, who argued for the rationality and therefore the full humanity of the native; and Juan Gínes de Sepúlveda, who argued that the indigenous people were born as natural slaves, essentially animals. This discussion shaped the interpretation of the *Siete Partidas*, the basis of the legislation that eventually organized Colonial Latin American society.[20]

The question before the Spanish Crown concerned the rights of conquest: "By what

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[20] See Luis N. Rivera, A Violent Evangelization: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

right had the Crown of Castile occupied and enslaved the inhabitants of territories to which it made no prior claims?"[21] This question could not be adequately answered by applying the limited categories of rationalist thought available to Spanish Scholasticism. Given the inadequacy of the philosophical categories available in the prevailing framework of Scholasticism, the locus of the debate shifted from one concerning the legal rights and categories of the conquered to one concerning the rationality and the humanity of the native. Scholasticism had 4 legal categories from which to draw: *de facto, de lure, vincibly ignorant, and invincibly ignorant*. The latter categories hinged on the matter of whether a people had heard the gospel but rejected it. Those who had heard the gospel, such as Muslims and Jews, were vincibly ignorant and could be conquered. Those who had not heard the gospel, like the indigenous American, could not be conquered. This put Spain in a legal bind.[22] The Iberian theologians, Francisco de Vitoria and Juan Gines de Sepúlveda, proposed a revised anthropology to deal with this crisis. Sepúlveda, who argued that hierarchy, not equality, was the natural state of the world, expressed a position that demanded no basic modification in the qualities or categories of human beings. In his eyes, the indigenous natives were unable to be a different modality of human being. Rather, belonging intrinsically to Nature, the native was created in a category between human and animal—in essence, simultaneously part human and part animal. Basing his argument upon his reading of Aristotle's Politics and the work of the Scottish John Mair, Sepúlveda regarded the native as occupying a lower rung on

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[21] Anthony Pagden, The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origin of Comparative Ethnology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 27.

[22] Ibid.

the great chain of being, the rung of 'natural slave,' different ontologically.[23] As a result, he

could argue that the Spanish had a right to exercise dominion

> over these barbarians of the New World and outlying isles, who in prudence,
> natural disposition, and every manner of virtue and human sentiment are as
> inferior to Spaniards as children to adults, women to men, cruel and inhuman
> persons to the extremely meek, or the exceedingly intemperate to the continent
> and moderate—in a word, as monkeys to men.[24]

Born a natural slave, a lower class of human being in whom natural passions

overwhelmed the rational faculty which made humans free, the indigenous people of the

Americas were considered by Sepúlveda to be less than human. Consequently, subjection to

the Spaniards was the natural state of human affairs and wars to achieve this subjection were

fully justified. Furthermore, these wars were necessary in order "to be able to evangelize

these rude, barbarous peoples, with their unnatural customs."[25] Although widely supported,

Sepúlveda's approach, because it denied the possibility of educating the indigenous people,

eventually lost favor with the Church.

Francisco de Vitoria, a centrist theologian, was able to integrate the indigenous native

into the prevailing philosophical categories by proposing modalities of humanity that

centered on the faculty of reason. In his formulation, natives were not fully human because

they possessed the faculty of reason only *in potentia*. That being the case, Vitoria proposed

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[23] Mair was the first to suggest Aristotle's category of natural slave as found in the Politics towards the solution of the "native problem." Aristotle wrote: Those, therefore, who are as much inferior to others as are the body to the soul and beasts to men, are by nature slaves . . . . He is by nature slave who . . . shares in reason to the extent of apprehending it without possessing it, (1254b)

[24] Gustavo Gutiérrez, forward to Witness: Writings of Bartolomé de Las Casas, ed. George Sanderlin (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), xiv.

[25] Gutiérrez, Power of the Poor, 195.

that the indigenous people were "natural children who will need education in order to be properly civilized."[26] By education Vitoria referred to what Aristotle called habituation, the training of the speculative intellect. Although Vitoria energetically refuted any reason for making war on or subjugating the conquered people of the new world, the logical consequence of his reasoning reintroduced the possibility of war and destruction when he drew up a list of hypothetical reasons that would justify such wars in other, theoretical, cases. Gustavo Gutiérrez criticizes Vitoria for working "with abstract hypotheses, as is typical of a theologian not in direct contact with the facts. Anyone familiar with the situation of the Indies knew the hypotheses were false."[27]

Bartolomé de las Casas approached the problem from a different direction altogether. Inasmuch as his point of departure was the exploited natives as oppressed 'others-as-subjects' of their own destiny, he refused to cite Vitoria or to criticize his intellectual positions, "estranged as they are from experiential reality."[28] Believing that all human beings are rational—especially the natives in the Americas—Las Casas perceived the indigenous native to be inferior to none and equal in art, education and political philosophy to the Greeks and Romans and more advanced in other areas than the English, French or Spanish.[29] This, on its own, proved their rationality and therefore their humanity.

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[26] Alejandro Garcia-Rivera, "The Cosmic Frontier: Toward a Natural Anthropology," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 2 (Feb. 1995): 44.

[27] Gutiérrez, Power of the Poor, 196.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Bartolomé de las Casas, The Only Way, ed. Helen Rand Parish, trans. Francis Patrick Sullivan (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 66.

> All the nations of the world are made up of human beings, and of each and every human being there is one definition and one only: that they are rational. [This means that] all have their understanding and will and their free choice, inasmuch as they are fashioned to the image and likeness of God. All have the natural principles or germinal capacity to understand and to learn, and to know the sciences and things that they know not. God has not made us slaves of one another but has granted to all an identical [freedom of] choice. Therefore one rational creature is not subordinate to another, as, for example, one human being to another.[30]

Being a rational creature, the native was blessed with natural rights that could not be revoked simply to benefit another. Las Casas insisted that should the Spanish persist in enslaving or oppressing the native, they would be in violation of the laws of God and were therefore subject to punishment.

An even greater issue for Las Casas was the issue concerning the salvation of the native; in his eyes, salvation was bound to the establishment of social justice. The link between salvation and social justice was so profound that he eventually inverted the hierarchy of problems traditionally posed by missionaries. He perceived that the salvation of the faithful, of those who claimed to be Christian, was more in jeopardy than that of the heathen. And, equally important, if, in the name of salvation, the destruction of the indigenous people was to be total, then they were better off remaining non-Christian.

> If the Indians' conversion to Christianity "could not take place without their death and destruction, as has happened until now," it would be better "for them never to become Christians." A live heathen Indian, in other words, was better than a dead Christian Indian.[31]

In contrast to both Vitoria and Sepúlveda, Las Casas understood that the religiosity of

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[30] Las Casas, cited in Sanderlin, xv.

[31] Gutiérrez, Power of the Poor, 195.

the conquered native offered proof of their humanity; he used that proof as evidence that they were to be seen as human, a creature of God rather than a reasoning animal. Thus, the inherent religiosity of the native was emblematic of their humanity and proved that the native's relationship to God is as creature. The anthropology proposed by Las Casas, which emphasizes creatureliness as opposed to reason, stands in opposition to the anthropology of rationality affirmed by Vitoria and Sepúlveda. The emphasis on creatureliness portends a significant departure from the prevailing scholastic categories. Ultimately, it is illustrative of an anthropology of creatureliness that recognizes all humans as fully human participants in creation.

In time, it was Vitoria's anthropology that guided the colonizing enterprise and set the stage for a modern Latin American anthropology applied to all colonized people in the Americas, including African slaves and the new *mestizo/a* population. Vitoria's anthropology became institutionalized through the legal and moral principles embodied in the *Siete Partidas*, a 1573 reworking of legal codes drawn up by Alfonso the Wise in the thirteenth century. The changes were made so that the laws contained therein would conform to the realities existent in the newly appropriated Americas. Under these guidelines, the king decreed new ordinances to regulate expeditions of discovery and settlement. Due in part to the effort at court of Las Casas and Vitoria and their long advocacy of gentle persuasion, the new laws did away with the system of *Encomienda* and encouraged the use of "civilized" means of evangelization.

> Use of the word *conquest* was banned in favor of *pacification*. Spaniards were to emphasize the wonderful advantages of Christianity, justice, and security that the natives might gain for themselves by peaceful submission. The horrible penalties

of devastation and enslavement for those who refused—spelled out so graphically in the earlier *requerimiento*—found no place in the new legislation. Settlement was to be made without injury or prejudice to the Indians.[32]

Unfortunately, though, Vitoria's victory resulted in a crucial shift in emphasis by the conqueror. If the native required education to become fully human and to be properly civilized, it was the duty of the church and state to provide that education. Thus, in the new world, pedagogy flowed from anthropological categories and political expediency.

Education in the New World

The Dominicans, Franciscans, and Augustinians, in a race for the souls of the natives, established schools and churches throughout the new countries. By 1553, the first institution of higher education in the Americas, *la Real y Pontificia Universidad de la Nueva España,* was founded in México City. This school, predecessor of *la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México* (UNAM), allowed for the education of criollos and *mestizos/as* but excluded the full-blooded native. Young native speakers of *Nahuatl*, especially those who attended the *calmécac* or were previously members of the ruling class, were taught Latin and Spanish; these students later assisted Bernardino de Sahagún in collecting ethnographic material for inclusion in the massive Florentine Codex.[33]

In the few small towns that possessed adequate missionary support, "there were schools for the teaching of praying, singing, playing musical instruments and other interesting things."[34] In every pueblo with a friar, instruction for young people was held daily in the

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[32] Kessell, 45.

[33] Translated from the *Nahuatl* into the English by Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J. O. Anderson.

[34] This is a description of a Northern New Mexico pueblo, quoted in Fray Alonso de Benavides' Revised Memorial of 1643, ed. and trans. Frederick Webb Hodge, George P. Hammond, and Agapito Rey

patios of the church, "in which children were taught to assist in the mass, to read and write,

and to sing and play musical instruments."[35] In these schools, students received instruction in

the necessary sciences, the faith and the customs "necessary to instruct and indoctrinate."

> [They] gathered in their barrios in the evenings and mornings to sing the four
> prayers and the hymns. The Indians repeated portions of the catechism two or
> three times, after which the sermon was preached and mass was held . . . . The
> whole community attended vespers on Fridays, and a *cofradia* supported masses
> for the spirits of the dead in Purgatory on Mondays and another, devoted to the
> Virgin, sang a mass for the living on Saturdays . . . . The Augustinians gave all the
> Indians instruction in the Eucharist. On each Sunday they were given more
> detailed teaching and examined on the catechism, after which those who passed
> were selected for communion the following Saturday . . . . As the act of grace was
> about to be consummated, they recited in chorus in *Nahuatl* Saint Thomas
> Aquinas' *Omnipotentens sempiterne Deus* as well as his prayer of the act of
> grace.[36]

In an attempt to suppress indigenous religion, every aspect of life was infused with

religious ritual and doctrine by the friars and church leaders. In central México, schools

which paralleled the *calmécac* were established.

> In the fashion of their former habits . . . we accustomed them to get up in the
> middle of the night and to sing the matins of Our Lady; at dawn, we made them
> recite the Hours; we even taught them to flagellate themselves during the night
> and to occupy their minds with mental prayer.[37]

Yet these schools differed in significant ways. In the *calmécac,* the goal of education

was the formation of the people, via the process of mentoring, for placement into the life and

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(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1945), 100, cited in Goodpasture, 57.

[35] Juan de Grijalva, <u>Crónica de la orden de N.P.S. Augustín en las provincias de nueva españa en quatro edades desde el año de 1533 hasta el de 1592</u> (México City, 1624), cited in John M. Ingham, <u>Mary, Michael, and Lucifer: Folk Catholicism in Central Mexico</u> (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 33.

[36] Grijalva, 125, cited in Ingham, 33-34.

[37] Bernardino de Sahagún, <u>Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España</u>, X, 27, quoted in Todorov, 238. It is Sahagún's opinion that "in this fashion the Good Lord leads us to the devil!"

service of the community; eventually each student became a mentor. In the schools founded

by the church, *mestizos/as* and natives were not permitted to be ordained as priests or to

become members of the religious orders. Indigenous converts to Christianity were allowed to

serve only in the role of interpreters, acolytes, and sometimes teachers (*doctrineros*). As a

result, there was little desire to learn and there was no ownership of the learning process.

Furthermore, religious indoctrination and the delivery of the sacraments was withheld, and, in

many cases, one or two friars frequently had charge of over one hundred thousand souls.[38]

Because the land mass was so large and the religious so few,

> Nearly all the people die without confession or other sacrament then baptism. . . .
> With regard to belief, the fault which we find is that they do not believe those
> things which are commonly thought by theologians to be necessary, such as the
> articles of faith and the mysteries which the church celebrates. Many of the people
> know the articles of faith and the prayers of the church fairly well, though many
> do not know them, and, of those who do know them, many say them like parrots,
> without knowing what they mean.[39]

As a consequence, a lack of adequate religious instruction allowed the people to keep

alive their old beliefs covered by the external rituals and practices that, to the outsider,

appeared to comply with the precepts and teachings of the church. Unaware that these "new"

rituals were simply reinforcing ancient patterns of behavior, the Spanish priests continued to

utilize their traditional methods as a means of educational practice. Even so, many

indigenous people protested and failed to perform the new rituals; those who refused were

punished and sometimes banished from the community. In reality, however, because of the

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[38] "Carta del arzobispo al Consejo Real," Charles S. Braden, <u>Religious Aspects of the Conquest of Mexico</u> (Durham: Duke University Press, 1930), 247, cited in Goodpasture, 32.

[39] Goodpasture, 33.

similarity between the outward rituals of the old religion and the new, outward adaptation to new religious practices reinforced the old religion. And, to prevent punishment by the priests, the bulk of the symbol systems became hidden, underground networks, often disguised in Christian clothing, or prudently sealed in the language and secret practices of the community. Throughout México vestiges of the old religion remained, hidden beneath prayers, rituals and ceremonies. Ironically, from an historical perspective, it is because the conqueror refused to legitimize the old gods that they survived. From the ruins of the dead pantheon of gods emerged the seeds of new hope in the form of numerous incarnations of popular faith and religiosity.

Social Consequences of the Conquest

Following the conquest, the *Mexica* records were destroyed, numerous priests and *tlamatinime* were killed, and the storytellers and children were forced to learn the language and fixed alphabet of the conqueror. Despite the claim by León-Portilla that "Mesoamerican literature blossomed" during the colonial period, the common people did not benefit.[40] While it was true that the children of the noble classes had access to the finest teachers and leading scholars, the masses of people experienced an overwhelming break with their past and their ability to commune with and communicate with their universe. In the pre-conquest world, the pictorial system for written and verbal communication allowed the *Nahuatl* speaking people to devise their own formal representation of history and to remain perceptually bound to the visible forms of the cosmos and the surrounding landscape.[41] In the minds of the

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[40] León-Portilla and Shorris, 12f.

[41] See above, page 98f.

masses of the people, the written alphabetic text created authority and caused frustration and confusion. Messengers forced to carry information from one place to another were astounded when the recipient knew the contents of a message before the messenger was able to verbally convey it. Such a feat could never occur in an oral society where couriers where chosen for their excellent rhetoric and ability to repeat and interpret the spoken communiqué. Forbidden to use their native language and system of learning for communicating information and stories as they had in the past, the people were forced to record and translate their stories into Spanish—a language which utilized unequivocal translations and favored fixed concepts. The new language presented a marked contrast to *Nahuatl*, which allowed an open translation with a multitude of interpretations.

> The indigenous nobles and missionaries who converted the contents of the ancient pictographs to written *Nahuatl* or to Castilian introduced a radical mutation in the indigenous historical tradition: they separated the indigenous text from its oral interpretation. From the moment when the ancient indigenous traditions were put into *Nahuatl* or Spanish, they lost their multiple significance. Starting with the putting into letters of the ideographic message of the codices, the indigenous historical text acquired a univocal meaning that it did not have before. The introduction of the European alphabet in this way converted the polyvalent ancient Indian text into a text with a single meaning, because the new writing, by choosing a single interpretation among the various that the ideograms of the codices permitted, established a single sense of the content of the text.[42]

Significantly, the people's link with the cosmos was squelched, the art of rhetoric was diminished and the historical memory of the masses was extinguished; instituted in their place were a dead language and, what the people interpreted to be, a dead pantheon of gods in the heavens. The fixed and rigid alphabetic interpretation of their stories caused the native to forget the meaning of their own texts; in time, they were no longer able to recall, decipher, or

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[42] Florescano, 122.

explain their texts according to their previous written and mental categories. Culturally, there was a loss of historical memory, the memory that gives a people their core identity.

Eventually there were significant differences in meaning discerned among the various ways of interpreting history. Destruction of the historical records, killing of the priests and leaders of the empire and institution of a written text also destroyed the rhetorical system that had energized the people's historical memory. With this loss, the *Mexica* lost the unifying and organizing center of their collective memory—they were completely reduced to the use of a popular oral memory.[43] In the ancient world, a correct interpretation of history was accomplished by a reading and explication of the historical records by the *tlamatinime*, men and women who learned the art of rhetoric, philosophy and advanced sciences in their studies at the *calmécac*. Unfortunately, the majority of them were slaughtered in the war of conquest. Without the *tlamatinime*, what flourished was a "popular memory," a memory lacking the capacity or the resources to continuously and in an orderly fashion collect historical facts and, moreover, a memory without the strength of a pictographic record to perpetuate those facts. Popular memory did, however, allow the people to conceive of and adapt various strategies for recovering, preserving and transmitting their past via the sharing of popular myths and stories. But, because the stories were no longer connected to the larger societal goal of people-making, they lost their power as a formative or as a transformative agent of culture and often took the form of mystical or apocalyptic legend. Whereas, in the pre-conquest world, oral tradition, ritual, and myth, served the natives in transmitting the past,

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[43] Ibid., 104.

in the repressive conditions that Spanish domination created, both the ritual and the oral transmission of the past lost efficiency for preserving the authenticity of their traditions and the power to transmit them with the multiplying force and effect that they had prior to the arrival of the conqueror.[44]

In time, the legends became aimed at convincing the pueblos of the fundamental dignity and righteousness of the current beliefs and circumstances of the people.

Further complicating matters, at some point indigenous memory became idealized and infused with the European religious and philosophical categories taught by the missionaries. Under normal conditions, history and traditions would have been reconstructed and corrected by the *tlamatinime*. After the conquest, interpretation of history was dependent upon the people themselves; neither the historical record nor the *tlamatinime* were available for verification. Eventually, people incorporated the stories of the conqueror into their own stories. This manner of reconstructing history

> was a means of enlarging it in contrast to the present and making the latter an even more detestable time. This double movement of violent rejection of the present and almost magical restoration of the old rule, when "everything was good," was the substratum that characterized the . . . . the sixteenth century.[45]

Incorporating old beliefs into the present condition and camouflaging them with a Christian veneer, permitted the past, syncretically, to enter into and be accepted as a part of the present. And, the new sharing of the ancient stories was one means of keeping alive the old traditions and ways of life. The ramifications of this double movement of accepting the present only as a function of the past, allowed a misleading characterization of history. Quite likely many of the myths thought to have emerged from the pre-Columbian past are syncretic fusions of

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[44] Ibid., 115.

[45] Florescano, 106 referring to the Maya Nativist Insurrection of 1546.

Christian doctrine and native history. The mythological status attributed to the priest *Quetzalcoatl* is but one example. The popular narrative anticipates the white-bearded priest-turned-god ending his banishment in the East, returning to *Tenochtitlan*, and beginning a new age by reinstating his past kingdom. For years it has been accepted that the *Mexica* acquiesced to Hernán Cortés because they believed he was the embodiment of *Quetzalcoatl* returning to claim his empire. Parallels between Christ and *Quetzalcoatl*, however, suggest that the myth was very likely composed by a student who learned the gospel from the conquerors after the conquest rather than before.

Popular reconstruction of the ancient story, although deeply grounded in the rituals, beliefs and practices of the past, incorporated elements of the present reality as a means of affirming the veracity of the current conditions. In this way the present was historically validated and "the integrity of the past was subordinate to the integrity of the present."[46] In a sense the strategy of recasting popular memory as historical memory allowed the reclamation of the lost world in an idealized manner. The pivotal difference occurred in the role the shared story symbolized in the lives of the people. Previously, life in *Tenochtitlan* was lived in a storied world, a world with connections to the surrounding landscape, the cosmos and to all living creation. Unable to establish a similar story in post-conquest México, the people were incapable of adopting a similar connection with the cosmos. The many indigenous insurrections that took place in colonial México were attempts to reestablish the story and, hence, the archetypal relationship with the cosmos. Lacking a newfound popular understanding of religion and wisdom, these acts of resistance would not have occurred.

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[46] Ong, 48. Subordinating the past to the present is a common characteristic of an oral society.

Development of Resistance: Popular Religion, Resistance and Rebellion

Gustavo Gutiérrez implies that Bartolomé de las Casas, who defended the indigenous people for the majority of his life, is the most significant link to liberation thought and theology.[47] Evidence reveals however, that, while a philosophy of liberation certainly owes a debt of gratitude to and had its roots in the thoughts and writings of Las Casas, its subtle nuances and beliefs were transmitted from one generation to the next via the medium of popular wisdom and religiosity—nurtured and practiced out of sight of and removed from the dominant Spanish culture. From the beginning, the indigenous people rebelled against their oppressors. The outer, physical rebellion, never truly suppressed, was sustained by an inner, spiritual rebellion shaped by popular faith and religion as well as adherence to traditional healing practices.

For centuries after the conquest the church imposed its beliefs and practices on the community; this, in addition to the pressures of tributes, vice-royalties, friars, priests, *encomienderos, hacendados*, miners, and merchants over the already weakened social structures of the indigenous communities, created a spiraling hostility toward the Spanish by the natives. Persecuted by the incessant pressure to conform to a foreign way of life, the people never ceased resisting the unrelenting attack that threatened to destroy their way of life. Subject to the harsh conditions of Spanish domination, they called into question the economic, social, and political order that oppressed and marginalized them, and of course the

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[47] Gustavo Gutiérrez, writing in 1983, states that "The thrust of involvement and theological reflection that began with de las Casas had its protagonists all through the colonial period. But it never had the breadth and assertiveness it had in the sixteenth century. Only well into the twentieth century will this same outlook return to the theological scene. The theology of liberation seeks continuity, on another horizon and in another age, with this sixteenth-century theology." Power of the Poor, 197.

religious ideology used to justify this domination. What they created was a culture of resistance, a resistance that enabled them to absorb the brutal hostilities of the dominant world while remaining true to their unique cultural identity.

This resistance was visibly concrete in the multiple religious and healing systems practiced by the people. Outwardly and in public they conformed to the desires of the church and *encomienderos*; inwardly and in private they practiced their old customs and traditions. In public, by adapting their old customs and traditions to the new values of the powerful ruler, the people constructed a new community solidarity centered around the patron saints of the towns, the communal possession of the land, and ties of blood and parentage—a true cultural syncretism.[48] Privately, worship took place in caves and on hillsides, far removed from the shrines and churches. In many places, the saints were built over the faces and statues of the old gods. Priests discovered that underneath many of the pictures of saints were painted the faces of the old pantheon of gods. Inside a number of broken statues were discovered images of the *Mexica* gods. Practically, this was the way in which the people managed to keep whatever relics of the past they could. Metaphorically, these practices represented the preservation of the former philosophical and religious categories beneath the new. Realistically, these practices served as a community defense mechanism against the threat of cultural annihilation as well as a means of reestablishing a stolen identity—an identity that included a strong tie to the political, religious and healing traditions of their ancestors. Finally, these practices nourished movements of resistance, movements that were always voluntary and emphasized concrete responses to the problems the community faced.

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[48] Florescano, 170.

Above all else these, movements were meant to preserve the ancient religious and healing rituals in secret and out of sight of mainstream society.

Hearing and understanding the Christian gospel from within their own context and culture, the people of México often departed from traditional Christian theology and created their own local theology. This provided a dual religious system and affirmed the link to the past. Grounded in a pluralistic understanding of the cosmos and the creator, the people were able to appropriate the new religious practices as their own. In the end, a subaltern re-telling of the story surfaced. A subaltern narration, as characterized by Robert Schreiter, is a class-based interpretation ordinarily rendered by the lower classes for the purposes of asserting their identity in the face of an oppressor who would deny that identity.[49] This retelling of the story is many times a subversion of the story. It is characterized by a reversal of codes: rich become poor, the non-rational commune with the rational. The retelling of the story allows the maintenance of a unique cultural identity in the face of assimilation.

Indigenous Religious Movements and Insurrections

The indigenous people of the valley of México, because they were prohibited from practicing their rituals or giving voice to their faith, sought to make the Christian creeds truly theirs by infusing their own meaning into those beliefs and then converting them into indigenous forms and rituals. Many of these rites and stories were constructed in *Nahuatl*, which acted as a password keeping the true meaning from the priests and political leaders. They were then transmitted from person to person in the local community with the

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[49] Schreiter, 136f. The story of *Nuestra Virgen de Guadalupe* is perhaps the best example of a subaltern retelling of a story.

admonition that they be kept hidden from the Spanish religious leaders. There were strict community prohibitions against revealing these stories across cultural lines. Also, sacred places were sometimes kept hidden from sight.

> *Chalcatongo* cave in Oaxaca exemplifies the religious, historical, and community symbolism of these sacred places. It is the site in which the Indians buried their caciques and that they managed to keep hidden for several decades after the arrival of the friars.[50]

Yet, despite the compelling urgency to keep alive and hidden the holy places, language, rituals, traditions and customs, the reality of maintaining a separate and internal culture was too much to endure. Eventually the struggle to maintain an ethnic and cultural identity—an identity which had been shattered by the conquest and then fundamentally destroyed by the process of Spanish cultural hegemony—resulted in widespread dissent. Moreover, an inherent sense of justice enabled the people to understand and grasp the Christian meaning of justice and appreciate the dissonance that existed between it and the degree of injustice bestowed upon them. The ensuing frustration and resentment felt towards the Spanish dominator eventually reached a breaking point. No more than a century after the conquest this resentment exploded in violence in various parts of México. Each rebellion was a collective response which resonated with political protest and social unconformity. Each of them provoked fervent upheaval in the native towns.

From within this milieu, an interpretation of the Christian story from the perspective of the marginalized native and *mestizo/a* emerged. The first truly indigenous subaltern "rebellion" that occurred in México was the alleged appearance in 1531, of *Nuestra Virgen*

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[50] Florescano, 112.

de Guadalupe outside of *Tenochtitlan* at *Tepeyac*, the location of the *Mexica* temple honoring *Tonantzin*. The image of Mary, the mother of the Christian God, depicted as *Tonantzin,* the mother of the *Mexica* creator, allowed the indigenous people to appropriate the apparition as their own. *Tonantzin* was known to the *Mexica* as *Coatlicue* (Our Lady of the Serpent Skirt) or *Cihuacoatl* (Snake Woman); it was she who was revered as "Our Mother" or the "Mother of the Gods." As described by Juan Diego, *Nuestra Virgen de Guadalupe* appeared as a dark, beautiful, young, pregnant *Nahuatl* speaking woman, standing on the moon dressed in pale red and turquoise and partially hiding the sun. The image of the dark, holy mother dressed in native clothing, standing on the moon, covering the sun and stars spoke to the people in words and symbols misunderstood by the new leaders; this symbol restored hope to the people of the valley of México.

This was not a rebellion in the traditional sense, but a re-formulation of the Christian story in an indigenous context; it was a subaltern appropriation of the Christian story and subsequent re-creation of a new story that established identity with and affirmed a connection with the conqueror god. "This mechanism of appropriating of Christian symbols of the conqueror presents itself mixed with the revitalization of the deep indigenous religious impulses."[51] By appropriating the Christian images and cults, the natives managed to create their own local cult. Inspired by the traditions of Christian orthodox theology, it could not be rejected by the Spanish religious authorities.[52]

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[51] Ibid., 145-46.

[52] Maria Teresa Huerta and Patricia Palacios, Rebeliones indígenas de la época colonial (México City: Instituto Nacional de Antropologia é Historia, 1976), 145; Victoria Reifler Bricker, The Indian Christ, the Indian King: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual (Austin: University of Texas

<u>*Guadalupe*: The Story</u>: According to popular tradition, the arrival of the lady filled the valley of México with joy, harmony and happiness. She appeared to Juan Diego at *Tepeyac*, the location of the *Mexica* temple honoring *Tonantzin*. One of the traditional understandings of her name means 'The Holy Virgin Mary who crushed the serpent.'[53] Her significance is derived from the symbolism she manifests. She is brown, pregnant and crushing a serpent; her figure blocks the sun and rests on top of the moon; Juan Diego first encountered her when he heard singing; the bishop believed Juan Diego only after the miracle of the roses in the *tilma*. Each of these, and others, possess symbolic meaning to the indigenous native. The symbols she brought, the "song and flowers," were part of the *Nahua* myth that depicted the beginning of the new age being brought in by flowers and filling the valley with singing, laughter and joy. "Flower and song" was also the *difrasismo* for "wisdom," the metaphor used by the *Nahuatl* speaking people to depict the poetic wisdom given by the gods as a means of understanding the transcendent force behind all creation. As a pregnant, *Nahuatl* speaking woman, she represents the one who will give birth to a new people—the eruption of a new and renovative alternative identity. The serpent represented both the old religion and the Spanish invaders to the *Mexica*. This is because *Quetzalcoatl* represents both the feathered serpent god of the *Mexica* and the priest, who, in the form of a man, was to return to *Tenochtitlan* at the close of the Fifth age and establish a new empire.

Press, 1981), 59, cited in Florescano, 151.

[53] According to tradition, the lady gave her name to Juan Bernardino, the uncle of Juan Diego. In *Nahuatl* the most similar sounding word is *Coatlaxopeuh* (pronounced *cuatlashupe.*) *Coatl* represents a serpent and *xopeuh* means crushed or stepped on with disdain. Thus her name has been interpreted by some to mean "The holy one who crushed the serpent."

Thus the new temple and its religion was to replace both parent religions.

To many, the apparition of *Guadalupe* is the central event in the history of New Spain, "precisely because this founding event has nothing to do with Spain but is a special privilege of God to those born in Mexico."[54] Furthermore, the oppressed natives were the first to enjoy the protection of *la Virgen*. With the appearance of this apparition, the Christian God became legitimate and a Christian symbol was converted into a symbol of pride and optimism for the people. *Guadalupe,* acceptable to both conquered and conqueror, became "the common symbol that identified the diverse social sectors that appeared from the Spanish Conquest."[55] In time *Guadalupe* became a symbol of liberation for all of México. What was for the conquered native a "Pentecost event," remains for some today the same meaningful event.

Guadalupe: The Symbol Today: *Guadalupe* is one of the major symbols Virgilio Elizondo utilizes to construct his pedagogy of *mestizaje*. She is depicted by Elizondo as the common mother of all Mexicans, *mestizos/as*, and the Americas. She is the modern day Pentecost event, a source and power of universalism, a symbol of rebirth, and one who transcends segregation and loyalty to one ethnic or racial group.[56] As symbolic of all of

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[54] Florescano, 141.

[55] Ibid., 145.

[56] Visiting the "Prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe Page" (http://www.sancta.org/) on the world wide web reinforces the present-day significance of *Guadalupe* to people around the world. There are well over a thousand prayers for healing, supplications, and words of thanksgiving listed. Many of the entries use words like "poor soul," "faithless sinner," and "unworthy son/daughter." An aura of humility and submissiveness pervades the site. A flickering, eternally lit candle glows beneath the picture of *Guadalupe*; the melody "*Ave Maria*" plays quietly in the background. Prayers, written in multiple languages, ask for, beg for and thank for special blessings. Worshipers request special healing (physical, psychological or spiritual), offer thanks for healing, praise her and simply worship her. A careful analysis

these, *Guadalupe* represents the eruption of a new and renovative, alternative identity. In

describing his first encounter with the symbol of *Guadalupe*, Elizondo says,

> We simply walked in deep mystical union with one another. We were in the
> rhythmic movement of the universe . . . in contact with the very source of life and
> movement . . . In that sacred space, I was part of the communion of earth and
> heaven, of present family, ancestors, and generations to come.[57]

Like Elizondo, *Guadalupe* has become a symbol of faith, a symbol of hope, a symbol

of women against *machismo*, and a symbol of political and economic liberation amongst

Chicanos/as.[58] Others emphasize the ties it gives them to their past and ethnic identity.

Tomas Atencio maintains that the symbol of *Guadalupe* is the glue that keeps the societal

structures together in a Mexican American context: the politics, the kinship system, the

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of the web-site reveals that the themes center around healing, praise, blessing, and thanks. Each person,
even the non-Catholic, recognizes that Mary as the nurturing mother of God who does not abandon them
when needed. Because the vision of Mary as *Guadalupe* is principally a part of popular culture, the site is
not officially sanctioned by the church and the focus is on psychological, physical, or spiritual cure. This is
evident in that the majority of the prayers are focused on healing and restoration to wholeness.

Jorge Durand describes *retablos* as one of the few culturally accepted ways in which "common
people can give public expression to their anxieties, needs, fears, and sufferings." Jorge Durand and
Douglas S. Massey, Miracles on the Border: Retablos of Mexican Migrants to the United States (Tucson:
University of Arizona Press, 1995). *Retablos* are paintings on tin cans created by poor immigrant
Mexicans living in the border between the U.S. and México. They serve as a "catharsis, a personal
testimony, a confession, an expression of gratitude or remorse that would otherwise be difficult to
articulate publicly. *Retablos* give voice to the joys, celebrations, sufferings, illnesses, disgraces, enmities,
losses, and tragedies of the human condition." As they post their prayers, supplications and concerns on
the internet, people identify and objectify their troubles in a socially acceptable form and set them out for
public display. Perhaps visiting this site and posting one's concerns is a method by which "ordinary people
find some measure of release from life's vicissitudes." Conceivably, the internet functions as a middle-
class *retablo*. More likely, the web-site to the *Virgen de Guadalupe* has assumed the meaning of a
religious shrine to which pilgrims flock.

[57] Virgilio Elizondo, "Guadalupe: An Endless Source of Reflection," Journal of Hispanic/Latino
Theology 5 (Aug. 1997): 63.

[58] See Ana Castillo, ed. Goddess of the Americas = La diosa de las Americas: Writings on the
Virgin of Guadalupe (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996); Isasi-Diaz and Tarango, Hispanic Women;
Timothy M. Matovina, "New Frontiers of Guadalupanismo," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology, 5
(Aug. 1997): 20 - 36; and Jeanette Rodriguez, Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among
Mexican-American Women (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

mutual aid societies, modern-day association groups, and the church as an institution.

> We believe that myth is basically energy. It is energy that is put together by human consciousness. So *la Virgen de Guadalupe* is a symbol that is rooted in myth. It is that same energy that created matter. But somehow it is put together so that it is meaningful. Values are the molecules of myth, beliefs, profound beliefs. The *Virgen de Guadalupe* is a very important symbol because it ties us to our Indian past. Its manifestation ties us to our traditional past.[59]

In this sense, the symbolic representation of *Guadalupe* is a very important element of a people's existence. The people utilize her not only spiritually, but also socially, politically and culturally. As symbol she provides the basis for identity—"Who are we"—as well as a sense of direction. The symbol of *Guadalupe* weaves in and out of the domains of healing, spiritual, social, and political reality. Furthermore, *Guadalupe*, as a symbol of identity, creates a meaningful structure of identity, as well as a meaningful structure of resistance against that which threatens identity—the "Who are we not"—whether it be political, cultural, religious, social, or economic.

> The Virgin of Guadalupe, I think, comes the closest to giving my Christian womanhood the dignity that it needs. I pray to her because the Virgin of *Guadalupe* is *morena*, the *Virgin* of *Guadalupe* is a mother, she is a pregnant woman, she is an Indian woman, and she spoke to Juan Diego—she understood the Indians and their needs; that the miracle of her apparition took place, well, that historically changed a nation![60]

Unfortunately, the symbol of *Guadalupe* has also been used by the powerful to placate and subjugate the poor and oppressed. In her name people are oppressed and kept in their place on the periphery of life. To avoid this misuse the original meaning of the *Guadaupe* symbol must be reclaimed. *Guadalupe* must continue to be recognized as a source

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[59] Tomas Atencio, quoted in Guerrero, 108.

[60] Isasi-Diaz and Tarango, 32.

and advocate of liberation, and as a cultural liberator of the people in the context of the twenty-first century.

Beyond Insurrection

The end of the eighteenth century brought many changes to the country of New Spain. European concepts of reason and scientific inquiry filtered into the country in a variety of ways. Viceroys—heads of government representing the royal Spanish family—were sent to the new world by the Bourbon kings of Spain. Influenced by enlightenment ideals, they brought their innovative ideas with them. New public universities, public libraries, printing presses, theaters, and educational reforms caused conflict for the church because they threatened the old Aristotelian pedagogy and the clerical control of culture.[61] In June 1767, Charles III was persuaded to eliminate the influence of the Franciscans from the Americas. Because they had built numerous convents and churches and developed extensive educational enterprises among the towns, the Franciscans were popular with the masses of the people. Furthermore, because the Augustinians and Dominicans were more severe in suppressing indigenous religion than other orders, the Franciscans—whose leadership and paternal care nurtured thousands of people, students, and parishioners—enjoyed widespread respect and affection. Their political influence, support from the local natives and loyalty to the pope created fear and opposition in the minds of the aristocracy. Eventually, all Franciscans were arrested, expelled from the country and their sizable missions and plantations were handed over to the government. Notably, their schools were also handed over to the authorities.

Other changes affecting educational policy occurred late in the eighteenth century

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[61] Goodpasture, 89.

when the Spanish authorities developed and implemented an educational plan to integrate all

natives into mainstream society. This plan included the restriction of indigenous languages

and the imposition of mandatory teaching of Spanish. Although the strategy met strong

resistance in many towns, "some regions, such as the archbishopric of México, had notable

success and numerous schools were founded there, promoted by the magistrates."[62]

Concurrently, in virtually every part of the country, and at every level of society, the uses and

customs of popular indigenous religiosity were condemned and violent criticism appeared

against the miracles, idolatry, forms of worship, processions, feasts, and superstitious

thinking of the people. "One after another, the traditional expressions of indigenous

religiosity, theatrical presentations, dances, and popular participation in processions were

condemned by the new enlightened mentality."[63] As resistance gave way to compliance, the

rituals and traditions of the elders became metaphors for disobedience and the core identity of

a dissident populace was diffused deeper and deeper into the people's psyche.

Cultural Resiliency and Resistance as Survival Mechanisms

Cultural resiliency, as described here, is either the ability to readily recover from

changes in one's environment or the ability for a culture to assume its original configuration

after outside influences impinge upon it. A holistic definition of resiliency incorporates both

of these meanings. In many instances, cultures subjected to oppression survive on a

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[62] Florescano, 181. Kessell notes that, unlike Central México, the extreme Northern and Southern parts of the country strongly resisted this plan. The people of the Pueblos in northern New Mexico still maintain their rituals and their language, as do the people of Chiapas, México. Kessell speculates that preservation of indigenous language was the key to cultural survival in these parts of the country.

[63] Florescano, 182.

biological or physical level only. In the context of the violent and unequal encounter of cultures, cultural resiliency includes the process of physical survival as well as the historical maintenance of an intact core cultural identity. Combining social-psychology and anthropology, Peter Elsass performed a comparative investigation of the unique social context of the Arhuaco and Motilon Indians of South America. In his studies, he discovered numerous cultural characteristics that he claims determine the survival or struggle of an indigenous society living in the context of oppression. He indicated that both cultural and biological factors are found in the survival mechanisms existent within a given culture. Furthermore, each culture develops a multitude of different means for survival, some more efficient than others. Finally, Elsass identified a number of features and factors to explain why some societies survive and others struggle to maintain their identity.[64] Elsass argues that communities utilize the following mechanisms as a means of survival: (1) a shared matrix; (2) existence of what outsiders perceive as thought disorders (actually the construction of differing paradigms for understanding the cosmos); (3) an aggressive attitude toward the invader as opposed to a passive attitude; (4) the presence of a respected shaman; (5) the ability to form alliances; (6) a means of maintaining social control; (7) the construction of a shared history; and (8) a collective consciousness. The ensuing discussion will focus on two of these mechanisms: a shared matrix and the existence of a respected shaman.

A Matrix: A matrix, or a shared cognitive framework, is essential to cultural maintenance and identity. In the Arhuaco society, a loom is employed as symbolic of a

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[64] Peter Elsass, Strategies for Survival: The Psychology of Cultural Resilience in Ethnic Minorities, trans. Fran Hopenwasser (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

shared matrix. Each person spends many hours weaving cloth. As a people, the Arhuaco understand weaving as a metaphor for formal thought processes. The custom of weaving gives structure to and organizes their cognitive world and their entire social existence. Weaving also represents an important ingredient in their history. Arhuaco mythology teaches that the art of weaving originates with the great mother, *Guneaka*. In their world, the earth functions as a giant loom and the sun is the weaver. Weaving takes great discipline, and to be a good weaver in Arhuaco society is to be a good person. In every way, shape and form, the community relates their matrix to everyday life and uses it in dealing with outside societies. In this way they are successful in keeping chaos out and order within. Like an intricate web, their history, social organization and physical environment is woven into the fabric of the loom. Most important, the Arhuaco people never divulged the story behind the loom to the invader; in this way they kept their matrix intact.

The Motilon, on the other hand, possessed a matrix represented by longhouses that ultimately destroyed by the missionaries. These longhouses were homes occupied by up to a hundred people. The way in which the longhouse was organized symbolized their social structure; the location of a family within the longhouse represented their social status. Within the matrix, placement of hammocks was based on age and marital status. After the longhouses were destroyed, the matrix was shattered and the culture depleted. This resulted in death, physical problems and confusion regarding the proper maintenance of society.

The Shaman: The presence of a respected shaman potentially acts as a cohesive factor in oppressed societies. When persons are sick or tormented they tend to return to their indigenous roots and seek the help of the shaman. Shamans offer therapy similar to grief

therapy and crisis intervention; here persons are confronted with their loss, go through a process of recognition, and learn to re-frame, mature and eventually regain their original ability to function. Unfortunately, when the people are unaware of the reasons why they believe, a shaman contributes in a negative way to resiliency. For instance, in Chemescua, where the native culture is slowly perishing, the people no longer understand the function of the shaman. In order for a symbol to bestow meaning, the people must first understand the reasons they believe.

Criteria for successful adaptation and resilience include a society's ability to adjust and change constantly. As the surrounding world changes, a culture or subculture must adapt to the changes, rebel against the changes, or move away from the changes. It can be concluded from Elsass' study that cultures most resilient to change are those cultures that demonstrate the following: (1) they are able to successfully adapt to change without changing their core history; (2) they maintain a collective community identity, and (3) they conserve their religious and cultural rituals and traditions apart from the dominator. With that in mind, in the context of oppression, cultural resiliency can be defined as **(1) the ability to readily recover from externally imposed shock, depression, and other difficulties, (2) the ability of a culture to sustain its original shape or framework after domination, and (3) the ease with which a culture or sub-culture incorporates external codes into their sign or symbol system and manipulates them as part of their own corporate memory.** These factors will now be explored in the context of the Chicano/a culture previously examined in Chapter 1.

When it was this time, tamales were eaten.
Everywhere . . . it was everywhere; nowhere was left out.
In each house, in each city, they consumed . . .
And there was giving of them to one another . . . . on the part of each one . . . .
There was giving in company; there was giving among themselves; there was
giving to friends; . . . to those whom they knew.
There was no giving in ill will; there was giving in gladness.

And she who first cooked her tamales . . . then went to give them to houses like
hers, her neighbors, those who lived in nearby houses.

And when this was done, . . . then they sat down to eat their tamales . . .
They were arranged in a circle.
They rounded up, gathered together, assembled their children.
This formed the family . . .
Thereupon they ate.[65]

In the *mestizo/a* culture, the lines between ancient folklore and the customs of the

Spanish Conquistadors are frequently blurred. Numerous traditions, beliefs, stories, and

dichos are found in the Mexican American community that parallel or approximate stories

found in the cultures of ancient Mesoamerica.[66] Francis Karttunnen, renowned authority on

the *Nahuatl* languages, reports incidents from native villages where advice and sayings are

still passed on in formal rhetorical, poetic discourses similar to those found in ancient

México.[67] Traditions such as tamales consumed at Christmas or *menudo, mole* and *posole*

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[65] Anderson and Dibble, General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex:Book 2 – The Ceremonies (Santa Fe N.M.: School of American Research, 1981), 167f. Numerous references are made in Sahagún's corpus of work to ceremonies involving the making, giving, offering or eating of tamales. The particular ceremony described here took place at the beginning of January.

[66] See above for one of the major symbols utilized in Mexican American culture—the symbol of *Nuestra Virgen de Guadalupe*—and her significance as a symbol of resistance and resiliency.

[67] Francis Karttunen, "The Survival of Indigenous Social Organization and Values in Mesoamerica," lecture delivered at the Institute for Development Studies, Helsinki, 1986.

prepared for the new year are derived from practices whose meanings are long forgotten.
These traditional foods, the means preparing them, and the beliefs concerning health and
disease contribute to a web of meaning that, when unraveled, reveal untoward information
about the culture—an endless semiosis. The continued existence of these foods, healing
rituals, traditions and sayings serve as examples of types of complex cultural and religious
resiliency. On the following pages healing beliefs and rituals, and the tradition of *dia de los
Muertos* will be explored as avenues into the cultural mind set and framework of today's
descendants of the *Nahuatl* speaking people.

Healing Practices and Rituals: The Treatment of Illnesses:

This section will consider the healing practices of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of
ancient Mesoamerica and their descendants in the context of cultural resiliency and
resistance. Because of the intricate connection between the mind, body and spirit in *Nahuatl*
categories of being, it is impossible to explore the religiosity of the people without also
exploring their healing practices. To the *Mexica*, health is connected to human conduct.
Despite many attempts to root them out, the cultural and religious practices of the
Mesoamerican people survived and are still found today in many parts of the Southwestern
United States. Included in those practices are rituals and traditions connected with health and
disease. Continued use of non-traditional and non-orthodox healing methods, common in
many parts of the Southwestern United States, represent a type of cultural resistance. These
healing methods, found particularly in areas with a large population of first, second, or third
generation immigrants from México and Central America, have been passed on from one
generation to the next out of sight of mainstream society.

In many immigrant communities, the presence and use of non-sanctioned spiritual healers' flourish and indigenous medical practices employed for thousands of years continue.[68] Mainstream American society and the conventional allopathic medical establishment find it difficult to understand the need for this network of healers and recently have undertaken a mission to eradicate and discredit them. As the business and advertising worlds search for more creative means of attracting a larger share of the growing Latino/a market, the district attorney's offices in Los Angeles and Orange County are shutting-down store front clinics operated by non-licensed "healers" from Latin American countries. Meanwhile, health care professionals, anthropologists and social workers are making a real attempt to understand the services these practitioners provide to people who frequently have no other source of medical care. With these concerns in mind and within the scope of this project, I will demonstrate in this section (1) that the healing practices utilized in immigrant Mexican American communities originated from the practices of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica; (2) that these healing practices, intricately interwoven with the religious beliefs and epistemology, comprise a sturdy matrix around which the culture is communicated; and (3) that it is this matrix which is the basis for the cultural resiliency of the people and culture.

While popular or folk medicine is often thought to be used by only poor and/or unacculturated people, the truth is that many people continue to use some form of folk medicine under the pretense of home remedies. These remedies are used for several reasons:

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[68] See, for instance, "Latin American Faith Healing Draws Many Adherents in L.A.," Los Angeles Times, 8 March 1998, B1.

for treatment of minor illnesses for which people would not consider consulting a physician, for the retention of a locus of self-control, and when accessibility to medical care is limited. Treatment with folk medicine may be given in one's own home, in the home of a relative, or in certain cases, at the home of a *curandero's*.

Curanderos/as are the clearly acknowledged experts in diagnosing and treating popular folk illnesses.[69] Still, family involvement is an intrinsic part of the healing process. Studies reveal that 90% of folk medicine adherents do not use the services of a *curandero*, or lay healer, but obtain their remedies from a hierarchy of lay healers.[70] This hierarchy includes one's own family and immediate social system, a respected older relative or a *madrina*. A person seeks out these people for the treatment of minor ailments curable by the use of herbs or massages. Those whose conditions cannot be treated by a family member, *señora* or *abuela* are usually referred to practitioners who provide massage, herbs, and other potions—*yerbero*, *sobador*, or *partera*, who also treats problems with young children. If these specialists cannot handle the problem the patient is referred to a *curandero total*, a lay healer who may use multiple modalities. The *curandero total* is highly respected in the local community and belongs either to a family with a tradition of *curanderisimo* or is a person who received the gift of healing (*el dón*) later in life. *Curandero's* perform rituals, singing, laying on of hands and are effective in the treatment of any psychological or physical malfunction.

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[69] See Mary Jane Garza, "Healing Spirits," <u>Hispanic Magazine</u>, June 1998.

[70] See John Lowell Bean, "California Indian Shamanism and Folk Curing," in <u>American Folk Medicine</u>, ed. Wayland D. Hand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 728.

The *curandero/a* has qualities in the eyes of the community that transcend those of the university-trained practitioners. The *curandero/a* seems much more interested. S/he does not attempt to admit people to hospitals, far from friends and relatives, amongst disinterested doctors and nurses. Neither does s/he laugh when disease is described as a punishment for negative emotions or magic. S/he provides treatment immediately. Most importantly, s/he never says s/he does not know the cause of an ailment. Furthermore, there is no direct remuneration for services rendered by the *curanderos/as*, although most of them accept gifts.

Aire, empacho, caida de la mollera, mal de ojo, susto, sereno, colico, bilis, corajes, chipil/chipi, frio de la matriz are a few of the disease states encountered in the Mexican American community. While the curandero has clear expertise in folk illnesses, 80% of the folk remedies are for traditional medical problems. Most *curanderos* know what they cannot handle and will refer severe health problems to the medical profession, including their own.

<u>Origins of Mesoamerican Folk Medicine</u>: The *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica developed a sophisticated system of maintaining health and treating disease. They established medical schools in *Tenochtitlan* and cultivated a pharmacopoeia of over 5,000 well studied and efficacious native herbal medications that were categorized in the *Codex Badiano* (1552). Hernando Ruiz de Alarcon did an extensive job of documenting and classifying the medicines used by the *Mexica* in the seventeenth century.[71] In his treatise he describes the role and function of the *ticitl* or one who is "accepted among the natives as meaning sage, doctor, seer and sorcerer." From the description, he appears to be referring to a *curandero/a* or shaman. Sahagún refers to the physician or healer as a "restorer," a

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[71] See Andrews and Hassig trans. Ruiz de Alarcon.

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"knower of herbs, of stones, of trees, of roots . . . . He provides health, restores people, provides them splints, sets bones for them, purges them, gives emetics, gives them potions; he lances, makes incisions, stitches them, revives them."[72] When Cortés requested supplies from the crown, he wrote, "do not send physicians, for the ones here are better."

A shaman was a respected healer whose practices were similar to the physician, but who also made ritual use of *ololiuhqui*—a hallucinogenic substance—to correspond with the spirits from other worlds. Ruiz de Alarcón devotes a great deal of space to the description of *ololiuhqui*, as well as to the troubles which follow from its ritual use. In *Nahuatl*, this substance was described as *teonanacatl*, which can be translated as "sacred mushroom." The first recorded testimony of the use of substances on festival occasions, or in the course of religious ceremonies and magically oriented healing rituals, is found in the works of Bernardino de Sahagún. He mentions the use of "mushrooms" and describes their effects in several passages of *Florentine Codex*. He describes, for example, the celebration of the return home from a successful business trip with a ritual fiesta:

> Coming at the very first, at the time of feasting, they ate mushrooms when, as they said, it was the hour of the blowing of the flutes. Not yet did they partake of food; they drank only chocolate during the night. And they ate mushrooms with honey. When already the mushrooms were taking effect, there was dancing, there was weeping. . . . Some saw in a vision that they would die in war. Some saw in a vision that they would be devoured by wild beasts. . . . Some saw in a vision that they would become rich, wealthy. Some saw in a vision that they would buy slaves, would become slave owners. Some saw in a vision that they would commit adultery [and so] would have their heads bashed in, would be stoned to death. . . . Some saw in a vision that they would perish in the water. Some saw in a vision that they would pass to tranquillity in death. Some saw in a vision that they would fall from the housetop, tumble to their death. . . . All such things they

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[72] Anderson and Dibble, General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex: Book 10 – The People (Santa Fe N.M.: School of American Research, 1982), 30.

saw. . . . And when [the effects of] the mushroom ceased, they conversed with one another, spoke of what they had seen in the vision.[73]

In a publication from the same period, Diego Duran reported that inebriating mushrooms were eaten at the celebration marking the accession to the throne of *Moctezuma* II, emperor of the *Mexica*, in the year 1502.

Because the indigenous people concealed their beliefs from the Spanish, it wasn't until recently that the modern-world discovered the secret of the cactus plant. In the modern form of the mushroom ritual, the old religious ideas and customs are mingled with Christian ideas and Christian terminology. Thus the mushrooms are often spoken of as the "blood of Christ," because they will grow only where a drop of Christ's blood has fallen on the earth. According to another notion, the mushrooms sprout where a drop of saliva from Christ's mouth has moistened the ground, and it is therefore Jesus Christ himself who speaks through the mushrooms. The *Mexica* believed the plants were gods or filled with gods because of their mystical effects.

The mushroom ceremony follows the form of a consultation.[74] Either the family of the patient or the person seeking healing questions a *curandero/a*. The *curandero/a* ingests the mushroom in a ceremony that usually takes place at night. Other persons present may also receive mushrooms, yet at a much smaller dose than the *curandero/a*. The ceremony occurs to the accompaniment of prayers and entreaties and the burning of *copal*. In complete

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[73] See Anderson and Dibble, General History of the Things of New Spain: Florentine Codex: Book 11 – Earthly Things (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research, 1963), for a description of *ololiuhqui* and other herbs and "earthly things."

[74] See Knab, A War of Witches, for a modern day description of a "mushroom" ritual.

darkness, at times by candlelight, the *curandero*, kneeling or sitting, while observers sit quietly on their straw mats, prays and sings before a type of altar bearing a crucifix, an image of a saint, or another object of worship. Under the influence of the drug, the *curandero/a* counsels the saints and God in a visionary state. In the monotonous song of the *curandero/a*, the mushroom *teonanacatl* gives its answers to the questions posed. In a vision, the *curandero/a* discloses whether the diseased person will live or die, or which herbs will affect the cure. Visions can reveal who has killed a specific person, who has stolen a personal piece of property, how some distant relative fares, and so forth.

The notion of resiliency is evident in the modern practice of the mushroom ritual. The native *Huichol* of *Nayarit* devote a great deal of time and energy on the harvesting and ritual cleansing of the plant. Unfortunately, modern enthusiasts are impinging on the practices and driving it back underground.

Interviews and Recent Examples of non-Traditional Medical Practices: The following interviews took place during Fall 1997 and Spring 1998 at Cerritos Community College. The interviews were completed at the beginning of the semester; prior to outside influence by the instructor. Each of the respondents is of Mexican or Mexican American descent; each of them is female between the ages of 18 to 40; and each of them agreed to the interview and its use here. The following are transcribed and unedited.

Interview #1:

> My family has a couple of health beliefs. Two of them are pretty popular. One is drinking herbal tea; drinking herbal tea will heal minor stomach aches and pains. Another one is rubbing or massaging the body and praying at the same time. It helps to heal sores and body aches. My mom massaged me with a medicine she brought with her. It had a certain smell, but it wasn't too bad. My mother would

also rub Vicks on our necks if we had a cold or cough, then she would cover my neck with a handkerchief.

Interview #2:

Whenever we had a canker sore in our mouth or a sore throat that may have a cut we would gargle a mixture of salt and warm water. Then there was a type of healing that I thought was very unusual. If someone in the family would have a major stomach pain or something so painful that would drive you to the hospital, my grandmother would come to our home and do some kind of a spiritual procedure. The items she used were a basin that was filled with water, a knife that was heated on the stove, and a candle, specifically a white candle. Then she would pray the rosary and some other prayers of healing. The person with the illness would be laying down, covered with blankets to keep warm. My grandma would have the items near the person and begin doing the procedure. What she would do is hold the candle above the basin of water and hold the heated knife with the other hand, where they would touch. The heated knife would melt the candle's wax and it would fall into the basin of water where it would create a picture of an animal or person. The picture would symbolize something or someone evil. My grandmother believed that illness or pain was caused by evil spirits and by doing that spiritual procedure the evil spirits would go away. The next day, the illness or pain would be gone. I always believed that the sickness would go away because god helped. I believed that all the praying we would do would really come through for us.

Interview #3:

I remember staying at my grandmother's house before and after school when I was about eight years old. During that time I remember being given caster oil every morning before I walked to school. I would follow my grandmother to the front of the refrigerator where she would open the door and pull out a bottle of caster oil. She would then pour it into the largest spoon she could find and proceed to feed it to me. Although this was not a form of treatment for an illness, it was a preventative action taken to ward off any future sickness by cleaning out the system of any impurities.

Interview #4:

For the treatment for earaches my mother would warm a spoonful of olive oil and pour it into the ailing ear. Then she would cover the ear with cotton so the olive oil couldn't escape. This treatment did seem to soothe the ear but I don't know if it was the olive oil itself or the warmth it gave off that had the most affect. If the pain was really bad she used a newspaper rolled up like a cone and lit the end of

the cone. The fire would make the ear "pop" and the pain would go away. These were just a few of the home remedies that I remember being used instead of the traditional Western way of visiting the doctor.

Interview #5:

When I have a cold my mom tends to make me soup, chicken or some kind of soup. She makes me drink tea and natural herbs to heal different illnesses. For example for strength and energy I take minerals, that are liquid. My mother taught me that when you have a fever you take a potato, cut it in pieces, put on forehead and it's supposed to minimize the fever.

Interview #6:

After two consecutive years of suffering from headaches, diarrhea, vomiting, memory blackouts, severe weight lost, my sister was referred to a psychologist for treatment of a psychosomatic problem that according to the physician, was causing her headaches and making her sick. After approximately three months of scheduled visits that possibility was ruled out. A vision exam was then done to make sure that her eye-sight was not causing the headaches. Day after day things were getting worse. She kept deteriorating by the minute, until one day on her way home with a prescription for more pain killers (Tylenol #3), she fainted at the receptionist desk. She was transported to the hospital where she was diagnosed with a severe case of trichinella, unfortunately, the virus had already found a way up to the brain. Unable to act against trichinella due to the incubation site, they opted to insert two shunts, one on each side of the head with the purpose to rid the brain of the excess amount of fluid that kept accumulating due to the reproduction of the virus.

These tactics worked for a few months. Unfortunately, the shunts kept on getting clogged. After four interventions her physician explained the danger of having a fifth surgery. Another surgery would probably result in her death. When we took her home the doctor advised us how long we had left before the trichinella reproduced and caused tension again. That was how long we had before her death. In our desperation and unwillingness to let her go without a fight, a friend from our hometown, told us about a *curandero* that had cured her father from paralysis. The next day we flew to Guadalajara in search for this *curandero*.

Once in México we found the *curandero*. After visually examining her, he asked for three days to get the necessary herbs and other items necessary to start the treatment. As promised, after three days he showed up at the house with all the necessary items. Before beginning he advised us not to talk to anybody about the work he was planning to do on my sister, to blend in with the community, to be

inconspicuous so that in case she was under witchcraft or black magic, the person responsible for her sickness wouldn't find out. Otherwise she would kill her to protect her/his work. Last but not least my sister couldn't leave the house for anything. She couldn't be seen on the streets, especially at night, something to do with the moon.

When treatment started, as expected, symptoms appeared. She started to have diarrhea. Her vision, and memory started to come back within a few days, and her appetite came back. It was like magic. She went from one extreme to the other within days of taking the herbs, and the rattlesnake powder.

She was given herbs and rattlesnake powder which is used to purify the blood, and rid the system from foreign microorganisms. The herbs were given to help her appetite. Rattlesnake powder is also given to people with leukemia. Being skeptical about the process, but as our last alternative, we put all our faith on the treatment and let God take over.

Interview #7:

For the past several months my family has suffered a number of illnesses and crises. We thought we were just unlucky, but last month we discovered that a young man who we recently fired had placed a hex on us. We found candles, herbs and symbols in his locker when we cleaned it out. Sometimes I see him in the neighborhood and I know he is up to no good.

These interviews demonstrate a familiarity with methods of healing not common in the dominant culture of the United States. Each person interviewed revealed a tacit knowledge of a system of healing not common to or found in established allopathic western medical practices. Unaware of the origin of their beliefs at the time of the interviews, their experiences reveal an acceptance of many of the same traditions and rituals practiced by the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica. For instance, the use of herbs, oils and massage; placing of an item in close proximity to draw out an illness; ritual dependence on prayer and candles; association of different shapes and forms with a non-physical entity; belief in witchcraft or "bad" magic as the cause of an illness or crisis; and the secrecy

surrounding the practices of the *curandero/a*. The origin of these beliefs and the *Nahuatl* understanding of the body will be explored next.

Healing in the *Nahuatl* Speaking World: In *Nahuatl* speaking societies, sickness is perceived as an intrusion (physical or spiritual) into the body. Since the body is porous and open to all dimensions of the cosmos, physical elements and spirits are capable of entering and exiting at any time. A body, singular and plural, "incorporates solids and fluids in permanent flux, generally material 'airs' or volatile emanations as well as 'juices' and solid matter."[75] In this way other persons are capable of directly injuring a person by sending harmful or evil emanations to cast a curse. Illnesses occur when harmful elements invade the body and an abstract or immaterial entity takes on material form. Sickness can also be perceived in a social light. Health and well-being are the result of a balance between opposing forces. Because of their intricate link with the universe, in the *Nahuatl* system, to act in an immoral way is to cause an imbalance in the cosmos. Any such action will necessarily be punished by the gods. In this way health is a community matter; a social illness is perceived as one's own illness.

Understanding this duality is the basis for healing rituals performed by *curandero's* in which sickness is extracted and sucked out of the body. When the immaterial sickness flows to its polar opposite and takes form, the *curandero/a* is required to extract the object in its material form—objects that resemble the "form" of insects, worms or snakes.[76] These objects are the physical manifestation of the evil emanation and symbolize the act of the illness being

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[75] Sylvia Marcos, personal communication, Claremont, California, 1997.

[76] See Knab; and Rudolfo Anaya, Bless Me Ultima, chap. 10 for a description of a healing ritual.

extracted from the body and subjected to destruction. The symbolic extraction may be a manifestation or materialization of the symbolic metaphor prominent in *Nahuatl* cosmology.

Healing in the Mesoamerican tradition is also depicted by the principle of proximity and the concept that like-affects-like. Since bodies and spirits are contiguous and porous, there is an ability to transfer spiritual and physical material by mere presence of one to another. According to this principle, when two entities are placed together, their properties transfer. Healing can be achieved by placing material on the external surface of the body to remove the offending illness. Likewise, an item or object might resemble the organ or body part in question. For instance, the placing under a bed of a flower ready to bloom is thought to promote an easier birth and delivery. These healing practices, traditions and rituals are derived from a philosophical construct abundant with a wisdom lacking in today's Western European dominated society.

The experiences of those interviewed and a study of the historical context of the conquest and the development of resistance show that beliefs, belief systems and practices centered around healing and culture have been in place for centuries, have survived the 500 years after conquest and are likely to survive for many more. These healing practices provide a source of cultural identity and a means of survival, physical and psychological, outside the construct of the modern-world. The ancient rituals associated with *Dia de los Muertos* are examined next.

Dia de los Muertos: *Dia de los muertos* is widely celebrated in México in early November. The original observance of *dia de los muertos*, which occurred at the end of the month of July and the beginning of August, can be traced back to festivities celebrated during

the *Mexica* month of *Miccailhuitontli*. The ritual celebration was moved to November 1st and 2nd by the Catholic missionaries so that it coincided with the Catholic holy days of All Saints' and All Souls' days. The tradition of *Dia de los Muertos*, which combines indigenous rituals and beliefs with popular Catholic practices and symbols, dates back to ancient Mesoamerican civilizations. The *Nahuatl* speaking people believed that death was a reawakening from this life of dreams; a means to travel through a portal to another existence. Death was not to be feared and warriors considered it an honor to die in battle. Warriors slain in battle and women who died during childbirth were accorded the highest honor and were thought to live eternally in the presence of the life-giving warmth of the sun after their deaths. The killed warriors served as the escort for the sun from the east, women to the west. Those who were killed during a ritual sacrifice were also assured a desirable destination in the afterlife.

The celebration of *dia de los muertos* was established to reunite living and dead family members and friends in an atmosphere of communion and spiritual regeneration. The indigenous people who continue to celebrate *Dia de los Muertos* believe the souls of the dead return to earth each year to visit their living relatives. During this time, families pay homage to their dead relatives by welcoming their return to this world with great respect and reverence. Since it is believed that one's life on earth is dependent, in part, on treating the dead well, relatives are sure to provide a feast consisting of the deceased's favorite foods and drinks. Therefore, careful and generous preparations, sometimes economically stressful, are carried out. However, nurturing and remembering the dead in the proper manner, ensures a community's own economic security, family stability, and health.

The complex rituals practiced on *Dia de los Muertos* contain three steps: preparation

for the ceremonies; erecting family altars to the dead; and the ceremonial feast of the dead and spiritual union with the dead at the home and in the cemetery. Preparation for the ritual begins as early as the middle of August when households plant the *zempoalxochitl* (marigold) seeds, prominent in the decorations of the family and cemetery altars. Next, altars appear in public places, schools and homes—the most important altars appear in the individual household. Altars are decorated with a variety of food so the dead who return will be nourished on specific nights. Traditional foods include sweets, breads, fruits, and cooked dishes like tamales. In addition, liquor, flowers, clothing, statues, pictures of the deceased, and images—most commonly the *Virgen* and Christ—are placed on the altar. These images, together with the cross and various saints, watch over the *ofrenda Calaveras*, skulls, are placed around the altar, not to instill fear, but as a promise of a new life.

The actual moments of reunion with the dead and the regeneration of family ties are carefully orchestrated. Beginning at 3:00 p.m. on October 31, it is believed that the souls of the dead begin to return to their family households. A trail of fragrant *zempoalxochitl* petals sprinkled with holy water is laid from the street through the yard to the foot of the family altar. This is to guide the spirits home from the cemetery. To "call the dead," the church bell is rung every 30 seconds until sunrise the following morning.

This ritual provides a means of remembering the customs and cosmology of the past. Its significance as a form of resiliency lies in its sustenance of identity in the face of a multitude of modern changes. In that context, *Dia de los muertos* will continue to inspire and recreate a context for renewing cultural ties.

Summary and Conclusion

Little by little the memory of the struggle for liberation in post-conquest México is being recovered. After the conquest, the people adapted their customs and traditions to the new values of the Spanish, created a parallel religious system and, by means of this dual cultural system, created cultures of resistance. The retelling of their stories was accomplished by handing down traditions from one generation to the next, suggesting a reconstruction of historical memory. These stories form the foundation for a shared culture of resistance. Popular healing practices, like popular religiosity and popular stories, give substance to the cognitive processes of the people in the form of a shared matrix; they constitute a way of maintaining social control and contribute to the construction of a shared history and a collective consciousness. Although it appears from a brief reading that there are some elements of syncretism involved with these practices, it is more likely, as Marcos suggests, that the modern-day practices take the form of a dual system. By providing a subaltern context for the reconstruction of identity, these practices are genuinely outside the established context and are predominately outside establishment control.

Despite the cultural resiliency this new resistance demonstrated and the unique lifestyle it demanded, the historical act of resistance may not have been solely the result of defiance against the oppressor and probably was not a choice left up to each individual. As is typical of communities of resistance, the social pressure to conform becomes intense. Arthur Kleinman, medical anthropologist, points out that the choice of a particular lifestyle, belief system or religious practice "becomes an idiom for negotiating ethnic and social class position and for claiming access to non-medical resources such as land, jobs, and

residence."[77] Thus, resistance to the dominator's life-style becomes a social necessity for survival. In the sixteenth century post-conquest world of the *Mexica*, the indigenous native was caught between the pressure to conform to the newly established community by resisting the conqueror and the pressure to imitate the oppressor as a means of survival. Creation of a multiple identity, acceptable both in public and in private, may have been the only option for survival in this environment.

In conclusion, the cognitive structures found in modern day immigrant communities, although now mixed with other practices, are derived from the practices of the *Nahuatl* speaking people who culturally and militaristically dominated Central and Southern México until the invasion of the Spanish in 1521. These practices, intricately interwoven with the religious beliefs and epistemology of the people, comprise a sturdy matrix around which the culture is communicated and it is this matrix which is the basis for the resiliency of the people and culture. The cognitive framework and epistemological assumptions around which these practices are kept alive is deeply embedded in the consciousness of modern day descendants of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica.

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[77] Arthur Kleinman, Writing at the Margins: Discourse between Anthropology and Medicine (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 24.

Part III

Toward a Theological Anthropology of Sociality

Discussing Chicano/a life in Southern California is impossible without including in

the discussion the significance of spirituality and religion. Part III will explore and

reconstruct a theological anthropology congruent with the model of the cosmos espoused by

the *Nahuatl* speaking peoples, specifically the *Mexica*. In this analysis I will utilize the

Mexica values and traditions revealed in Part II. Highlighting the indigenous roots of

contemporary *mestizo/a* culture allows fuller appreciation of the underlying indigenous

epistemological framework detected in today's Chicano/a community. As clarified in

Chapter 2, above, the spirituality expressed by the majority of Mexican American families in

Southern California communicates the development, preservation, and communication of

symbols and symbol making systems derived from multiple sources, including, the *Nahuatl*

speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica and the Spanish missionaries. Appropriate to the

post-conquest influences of Christianity on the conquered people—an influence that exerts

itself today in the lives of their descendants—the theological analysis done here also draws

upon the works of three prominent Christian theologians: Jürgen Moltmann, Leonardo Boff

and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Considering both the Christian and *Nahuatl* perspective offers the

reader a comparative reflection between the anthropology of the *Nahuatl* speaking people and

the way in which the three Christian theologians construct ideas of community, God and

social systems.

In the *Nahuatl* speaking world, the entire cosmos functioned as a means of integrating

the spiritual and physical aspects of life. The landscape was a living, breathing reminder that

the multiple manifestations of the one who existed *in tloque in nahuaque* was alive, animated and involved with the community. Humanity, contiguous with the nearby environment—and by association, contiguous with the spirit world—was responsible for the maintenance of the immediate physical world as well as the spirit world represented by the gods of the fifth sun. The world inhabited by the gods, together with the world occupied by the nearby landscape, fashioned a living, breathing cosmos whereby spirit and landscape entered into a parallel relationship with the community. By conceptually holding together the contrasting worlds represented by the physical and spiritual forces of the cosmos, the *Nahuatl* speaking people were able to avoid the dichotomy between body and spirit that exists today in many Western philosophies. Understanding the facility with which the *Nahuatl* speaking people harmonized these two apparently incongruent concepts is the key to understanding their philosophy of humanity and community. It also provides Latino/a theology—and all theology and pedagogy grounded in indigenous epistemology—with a means of avoiding the problematic of deducing "an idea of struggle from an a priori aesthetics."[1] Indeed, theology constructed from indigenous categories cannot distance itself from the every day struggle of the community even while it affirms the every day aesthetic of the cosmos.

In Chapter 6, I will explore a perichoresis-community interpretation of sociality as one possible way of integrating the *Nahuatl* understanding of the Creator's role in the cosmos with the panentheistic vision of God advocated by Jürgen Moltmann—humanity in fellowship with humanity, with God, and with all creation. I will then present a comparative

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[1] Manuel J. Mejido, "A Critique of the 'Aesthetic Turn' in U.S. Hispanic Theology: A Dialogue with Roberto Goizueta and the Positing of a New Paradigm," Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology 3 (Feb 2001): 19.

reflection of the way in which Moltmann, Bonhoeffer and Leonardo Boff construct ideas of community, God and social systems. A perichoresis-community model of sociality is similar to the social structure of community developed by the *Nahuatl* speaking people. It also affirms Dietrich Bonhoeffer's portrayal of relationships and communities as the fundamental social elements of a society. Collectively, Bonhoeffer, Moltmann and Boff offer a practical means of reformulating a social doctrine of the godhead compatible with the *Mexica* view of humanity. This dual analysis provides a means of connecting the contrasting worlds represented by the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica and the three modern Christian theologians.

Finally, combining a social doctrine of the Trinity with the *Nahuatl* realization that the spirit of the one who exists *in tloque in nahuaque* is the vivifying force of the cosmos, I will reconstruct a theological anthropology of sociality. The ability to reinterpret social constructs of reality from the perspective of the *Nahuatl* speaking people is essential for the construction of a pedagogy specific to the community represented by the modern day descendants of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica. This reinterpretation of sociality will provide the framework for succeeding chapters. From here further reconstructive work towards a holistic ecology of indigenous education can be achieved.

CHAPTER 6

Constructing a Communitarian Theological Anthropology

In third world cultures where there exists increasing suspicion of western-based

theological constructs, there is a distrust of theologies that originate in the individualistic

mentality promulgated by first world theologians. In oppressed cultures, it is believed that

first world theologies are grounded in abstract formulations ultimately derived from a

rationalist mentality that takes "its point of departure in its own proclamation of the modern

freedoms."[2] A significant criticism is that this rational, linear type of thinking is

fundamentally theoretical and alienates the world from a concrete, living relationship with the

Creator. The result is a modern day intellectual who,

> formed in a stale scholastic rationalism . . . prefers to work with abstract
> theological hypotheses. For them a concrete faith, when all is said and done, is
> just a nuisance.[3]

Consequently, individualistic based, non-concrete theologies overlook the reality

facing poor and oppressed peoples worldwide and seek to provide answers to the questions of

the *non-believer*. Community-based theologies, in contrast, confront the challenge of the

non-person.[4] These theological constructs begin with the problematic of the poor and

dispossessed living side-by-side in a community of fellow human beings, those whom the

bourgeois dominators seek to keep "without a history." They reject the notion that theology

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[2] Gutiérrez, Power of the Poor in History, 92.

[3] Ibid., 217.

[4] The non-person is the one "living on the margins of society–tramps, beggars, thieves, prostitutes and other outcasts, most of the unemployed, slum-dwellers, most of those who are hungry or thirsty, who are homeless, who live under arches, who scrounge a living . . . ." José Comblin, The Holy Spirit and Liberation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989), 95.

should begin with the problematic of the solitary, "individualistic modern human being."[5] In confronting the concrete issues faced by oppressed peoples on a daily basis, these theologies, by definition, are praxis oriented—they are tangible, assure results and have practical spiritual and corporeal effects on the life of the community. Thus, they are liberating, a notion that can never be construed as abstract. In this context, liberation is

> cultural liberation (breaking away from the liberal-enlightenment-magisterial culture in order to cultivate a culture of the people); political liberation (from the power of 'the empire' which is at present represented by the U.S.A. and its local oligarchic clientele); and structural liberation (the end of the bourgeois state and the creation of a different shape of society. . .).[6]

In essence, community-based theologies affect the world in ways that create a different purpose and goal of society. In order to successfully achieve this goal and articulate the needs of oppressed peoples, these theologies must be "ecclesial, historical and Trinitarian."[7]

In the Western world, specifically in the United States, the decline of the social doctrine of the Trinity created a vacuum filled by the ideology of individualism; particularly a possessive individualism.[8] This is especially true in modern first world countries, where traditional forms of community have diminished. Notwithstanding Karl Rahner's claim that contemporary Western Christians, for all practical purposes, are, "despite their orthodox

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[5] Gutiérrez, Power of the Poor in History, 92.

[6] Jose Miquez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 67f (emphasis in original).

[7] Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), xx.

[8] Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 199. "It is a typically Western bias to suppose that social relationships and society are less 'primal' than the person."

confession of the Trinity . . . in their practical life, almost mere 'monotheists,'"[9] there is an

urgent need to rekindle a social construction of humanity grounded in a perichoresis,

community-based interpretation of the godhead. I contend that Boff and Moltmann's social

construction of the godhead offers a foundation on which to construct a community-based

theological anthropology. The Trinitarian models of sociality proposed by Leonardo Boff

and Jürgen Moltmann encourage new forms of community, based as they are on diverse and

free participation of the entire cosmos. Boff and Moltmann's thinking clearly supports the

communal and social aspect of the Trinity: in their model, unity and diversity become a

society of communion in God, springing from God's eternal communing with God and with

what is not-God. Theirs is a model which argues that through communion and perichoresis,

all creation shares in the mystery of the triune godhead.

The areas I will explore in analyzing the Trinitarian models of Boff and Moltmann

are, first, a brief historical overview of the connection between social practice, liberation

thought and the historical doctrine of the Trinity; second, the social dimensions of a

perichoretic model of the godhead; and finally, the implications of this perichoretic model for

a model of human sociality. Working with Boff's and Moltmann's social model of the

Trinity I will show that, in order for the model to cohere in an orthopathic sense, the 'I-thou'

conception of sociality must be elaborated and extended through the integrating work of the

Spirit to include the "I-thou-we-God."[10] In such a scheme, the self has ontological priority

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[9] Karl Rahner, The Trinity (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), iv.

[10] Jürgen Moltmann, The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 33.

only in the context of a series of social relationships; an individual never exists alone but has meaning and value only in terms of these relationships. This formulation is consistent with the *Mexica* perspective of the purpose and role of human beings in the community. At this point the community of interconnected human beings becomes the eternal relation between God and humanity concretized as social being. This insight, developed more fully by Bonhoeffer, is the deeper meaning suggested by a social understanding of the godhead.

Background—The Trinity and Liberation

The difficulty contemporary Christians have with the traditional doctrine of the Trinity stems from uneasiness or unfamiliarity with the metaphors used by Saints Augustine and Aquinas, the principles proclaimed at Nicæa, and by later theological formulations of the doctrine. Yet, the doctrine of the triune God is a practical one that originated from a social understanding of the godhead that distinguished between faith in the Creator with multiple names and the abstract formulations of a distant God declared by Christian theologians at Nicæa and later councils. Trinitarian theology, cultivated by the community of believers in response to the first century experience of the incarnation, life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, became centered on concrete human practice in each sphere of life, including the socio-political. Thus, in the present age, a community-based understanding of the godhead is incapable of apprehending God and the cosmos by projecting earthly abstractions into the heavens without regard to the present social situation. It is only a socially based understanding of the Creator that is capable of forming a Christian theology focused on the tangible, down-to-earth practices of faith.

In the early church, the dominant means of describing the godhead was grounded in

the assumption of the unity of the <u>Substance</u> or <u>Essence</u> of the Creator. In this way, the oneness of God's being and the co-equality of the persons of the godhead was ensured. In other words, in the Latin world, the divine <u>nature</u>, and all the philosophical undertones it conveyed, functioned as though it were a single person. A unified, and predominantly static 'Supreme Being' of the philosophers, and not the triune Creator-God, became the starting-point and central point of reference for thinking about God. Augustine provided the chief contribution to the Western orientation with his psychological theory of the Trinity and the comparison of the two processes of the Divine Life to the analogical processes of human self-knowledge and self-love. Such preconceptions, by emphasizing God's oneness, resulted in a modalistic conception of God. If the Father, Son and Spirit are simply 'modes' or 'faces' of the one God, as modalism proclaimed, then the incarnation of the Son was only a passing stage. In that case, the God that became human did not remain human.

In Eastern Trinitarian theology, on the other hand, the unifying principle defining the Creator was not the divine nature, but the Father-Creator. The Father held the key to the nature of the Trinity. In time, depictions of God developed around the <u>difference</u> between the Divine persons. This affirmed the co-eternity of the three Divine persons and only subsequently affirmed the oneness of God. The extreme position here was a subordinationist position: one that proclaimed the hierarchy of the Father. Later developments, however, resulted in a tri-theistic conception of God: one that proclaimed three co-equal, co-eternal beings with no need to affirm the unity of God.

Prior to the first Council of Nicæa, Arius insisted that the father was immutable and the Son was the mutable intermediary between God and the world. In Arius' formulation, the

divine *logos* was a creature neither co-equal nor co-eternal with the Father. Arius, then,

forced the council to decide whether humanity was in debt to a creature and not to God for

salvation. Justo González speculates that the Arian contention may have been necessary to

establish the immutability of God.

> Arius' basic scheme was one in which God the Father was immutable, and the Word was the mutable intermediary between that God and the obviously mutable world . . . . What most disturbed Arius was not the possibility that this other one—namely, the Word of God—might also be called God, but rather that such a declaration would make God mutable, for it was clear, especially through the incarnation, that the Word of God was mutable.[11]

While the Bishops gathered at Nicæa never completely denied the immutability of

God, they realized they were bound to philosophical constructs which favored the ontologist

and static notions of God. These notions had already become widespread and popular

amongst the Christian population. However, they could not accept the Arian position

precisely for the reason that, "taking that immutability as its point of departure, it made it

impossible for God to communicate directly with humankind."[12] According to Athanasius,

only a mutable God is in a position to directly commune with humanity. He insisted,

therefore, that there must be a direct communication of God with creation and particularly

with human beings. Hence the *logos* of God must be fully human and fully divine. Extended

to its logical conclusion, what remained was a "promoted," and therefore more divine Christ,

and a "demoted," or less divine godhead. Unfortunately, Athanasius and the others refused to

carry that notion of God to its ultimate social-political consequences.

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[11] González, <u>Mañana</u>, 105.

[12] Ibid., 107.

When the council's decision was made known to the masses of poor and oppressed

Christians, the political implications were widespread and immediate. People understood the

social significance of a more human godhead and quickly embraced the Creator who was

incarnate in the poor Jewish carpenter condemned to death by the Roman Empire.[13] Such a

God was more like they perceived themselves—outcast and forsaken. In contrast, the

Emperor Constantine soon realized that the exaltation of the godhead was critical to his

understanding of the hierarchy upon which the imperial power rested. Recognizing that he

had aligned himself with a demoted God that was now less divine, Constantine, in time,

readmitted Arius to communion and took Eusebius of Nicodemia, a leading Arian advocate,

as his advisor. Although Arian beliefs eventually dissipated, it became clear that,

historically, the doctrine of the Trinity, like the doctrine of God, is a theological formulation

with implications for all areas of life, including the way in which human beings order their

society and the political and economic relations within that society.[14] Justo González'

concludes, "There is no doubt that faith in a 'prime unmoved mover' or a static 'Supreme

Being' historically has been and still remains a means of 'sacralizing oppression.'"[15] Even

today, theological formulations and proclamations oppress people in the name of God.

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[13] For an analysis of the political implications of the Doctrine of the Trinity, see Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1974), 325-27.

[14] González, Mañana, 113. For a detailed overview of the above, see Justo L. González, A History of Christian Thought (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 1:273-298, 309.

[15] González, Mañana, 110. Boff agrees that "strict monotheism can justify totalitarianism and the concentration of power in one person's hands, in politics and in religion." Leonardo Boff, Trinity and Society, Trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1988), 20.

Boff and Moltmann—An Overview

Leonardo Boff and Jürgen Moltmann advocate a social concept of the Trinity that emphasizes the sociality of the relations between and among the persons of the godhead—a triunity of the godhead. Arguably it is their social doctrine of the Trinity that discloses God's vision for society: humanity in fellowship with humanity, with God, and with all creation. Because their social doctrine of the godhead permits thinking in terms of relationships and communities, this Trinitarian hermeneutic will be the starting point for our discussion of the Trinity. The flexibility of thinking in these terms avoids the dilemma of (1) describing God in static, abstract metaphysical terms that inevitably collapse the Trinity upon itself; and (2) concurrently supersedes subjective thinking "which cannot work without the separation and isolation of its objects."[16]

Boff outlines three traditional theological approaches to the Trinity. The first approach he describes as *doxological*; he characterizes this as the approach of those who are satisfied with what they find in the New Testament and liturgical tradition and fear going beyond these texts. The second approach he refers to as *historicist*; these are the theologians who limit themselves to the revelation of the Trinity in history where they see the process of God's trinification in that history. The third approach he terms the *dialectical*; this is the approach of theologians who attempt to find the fundamental meaning of the presence of the Trinity in history and of history in the Trinity.[17] In contrast to these three traditional approaches, both Moltmann and Boff, similar to Karl Rahner, advocate a Trinitarian

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[16] Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 19.

[17] Boff, Trinity and Society, 114 (emphasis in original).

reflection that claims: The economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity. Even so, Boff is able to assert this only because, for him, the economic Trinity is the route to and is prior to the immanent Trinity. Moltmann on the other hand, maintains the essential unity of the two, arguing that "the immanent and the economic Trinity cannot be distinguished in such a way that the first nullifies what the second says. The two rather form a continuity and merge into one another."[18]

In any case, throughout their discussions of the godhead, both Boff and Moltmann encourage a strictly trinitarian thinking over against the emphasis on "processions" or "personhood." Thinking in terms of persons, whether it be the substantial understanding of "person" (Boethius), the relational understanding of "person" (Augustine), or the historical understanding of "person" (Hegel), allows the persons of the godhead become the product of the relations of their nature to itself; this ultimately become no more than a "dialectic of causality."[19] Instead, the godhead in and of godself, must be viewed as the origin of the divine nature—being co-eternal and co-equal. Trinitarian thinking allows such a holistic understanding of the godhead. As opposed to those metaphysical categories that eventually produce a Trinity bound to either modalism, subordinationism or tri-theism, both Boff and Moltmann propose starting with the Trinity as revealed in the scriptures and as apparent from the historical actions of the Jesus Christ who is revealed by the Spirit and experienced by

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[18] Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 152.

[19] Only by combining these three notions of person do we allow an understanding of God as person, as relationship, and as the living changes in the trinitarian relationship. This is helpful because "only when we are capable of thinking of Persons, relations, and changes in the relations *together* does the idea of the Trinity lose its usual static, rigid quality. Then not only does the eternal life of the Triune God become conceivable; its eternal vitality becomes conceivable too." Ibid., 174 (emphasis in original).

humanity. It is of utmost importance that they both discern the continued revelation of the triune God through the Spirit as being experienced by humanity in history. This revelation of the godhead is especially significant for Boff, because, for him, the historical consequences are those that are concretely revealed in the world of the here and now and are the criteria by which any Christian doctrine must be measured. The revelation of the triune Creator takes place specifically through the Spirit of God "as God is, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit"; furthermore, it is experienced as the living together and

> co-existence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all three existing from the beginning, revealing each other, knowing one another and communicating themselves from the beginning . . . in eternal correlation, interpenetration, love and communion, which make them one sole God.[20]

Underlying Boff's methodology is his understanding of the dialectic of revelation: the Trinity is the mutual revealing of Father, Son and Spirit to one another <u>and</u> the Son is the full, complete revelation of the godhead <u>to the world</u>. This suggests that the sole manner by which the cosmos communes with God is through the Son and the Spirit; and through the Son, the Father expresses himself completely. Methodologically, this is evident in the way Boff evaluates the actions of the Trinity in human history. The economic Trinity, which constantly reveals the primordial characteristics of the Trinity—the immanent Trinity—also reveals the mission of the triune godhead. Boff maintains that it is the mission of the Creator and the eternal design of the primordial Trinity to bring all beings into its communion through the mediation of the Son and the life-giving, driving force of the Spirit. This is fulfilled in history through the incarnation of the Son and is continued today through the

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[20] Boff, <u>Trinity and Society</u>, 3, 8.

indwelling of the Spirit. By manifestation in human form the Son was humiliated. According to Boff, in this humiliation the Son accepted and adopted threatened and sinful human nature in its entirety, making it part of God's eternal life. As such, "the humanity of God and the divinity of humanity is held together" in eternal communion.[21] The resulting anthropology is one whereby, through the incarnation of the Son, the Triune God communicates Godself wholly and utterly, fulfilling the promise made to humanity in creation; the promise that all humanity should possess the *imago dei*, the image of God.

In The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, Jürgen Moltmann begins his inquiry with "the special Christian tradition of the history of Jesus the Son and from that [attempted] to develop a historical doctrine of the Trinity."[22] Earlier, in The Crucified God, he concluded that questions regarding what the death of Christ meant for God, and the subsequent criterion for all theology which claims to be Christian, was set forth in the God-forsaken cry with which Christ died on the cross. This he did contrary to "the ancient metaphysical apathy axiom" which ignored the essential suffering of God. If, then, the center of all Christian faith was found in the history of Christ, and the center of the history of Christ was his passion and death on the cross, it follows that "His history is the history of a great passion, a passionate surrender to God and his kingdom."[23] One can only conclude that, for Moltmann, the center of Christian faith is the passion of the passionate Christ. The history of Christ's life and the

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[21] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christ the Center (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 84.

[22] Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 19.

[23] Ibid., 21.

history of his suffering belong together.[24] Furthermore, "the history of the world is the history of God's suffering."[25] The suffering Son dies forsaken by the Father; the Father suffers the death of the Son; the Spirit proceeds from the event as the Spirit that creates love and brings the dead alive.[26] This path of self-emptying is the path of the divine love in its essential nature. The whole Trinity is caught up in this movement towards self surrender. "Suffering in solidarity with the whole of creation is the suffering of the triune God."[27]

> If a person once feels the infinite passion of God's love . . . then he understands the mystery of the triune God. God suffers with us–God suffers from us–God suffers for us: it is this experience of God that reveals the triune God. It has to be understood in trinitarian terms. Consequently fundamental theology's discussion about access to the doctrine of the Trinity is carried on today in the context of the question about God's capacity or incapacity for suffering.[28]

Moltmann, then, bases much of his discussion on the Trinity upon his understanding of the suffering of God. By discerning the Trinity as the true understanding of God, he places all human suffering within God while interpreting the process of God's history as the reunion of the separated.

Beginning with the economic Trinity and extrapolating back into the inner being of God—the immanent Trinity—both Boff and Moltmann provide a theology not preoccupied

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[24] Jürgen Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1990), 151. Cf. Trinity and the Kingdom, 21.

[25] Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 4.

[26] In this context, "the Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son to anticipate and bring about a new creation." Rebecca S. Chopp, The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1986), 110.

[27] Moltmann, Way of Jesus Christ, 179.

[28] Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 4ff.

merely with theories about God, but one that always inherently focuses on the relationship of theology to practice. Inasmuch as "faith is in fact an existential unity of theory and practice, as can be seen in the life of the apostles . . .,"[29] theology can no longer be only a matter of orthodoxy, but is best described as orthopraxy. It must no longer be mainly contemplative but must become operational; it must arise out of reflection on concrete practice. However, a major point of difference between Boff and Moltmann occurs in the epistemological origin of their respective theology's and the place of praxis in each system. I have identified the following differences between Boff and Moltmann and their respective approach to the doctrine of the triune God: (1) their approach to tradition; (2) their understanding and use of human versus divine praxis; and (3) their paradigmatic vision of humanity and society.

Jürgen Moltmann seeks to maintain a tension between tradition and contemporary theology, arguing for necessary changes within the context of continuity. This compels him to go great lengths to show the historical connection between his doctrine of the Trinity and that of the early church theologians. Leonardo Boff, while appreciating the connection between his perspective of the Trinity and tradition, appears to be more willing to question the foundation upon which that tradition stands and disregard it—especially if it bears no relationship to human experience and praxis.[30] While this frees Boff to explore obscure territory, it also enables him to digress. Such is the case in his belief in and analysis of the incarnation of the Holy Spirit in the person of Mary.

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[29] Moltmann, Crucified God, 60.

[30] Boff, Trinity and Society, 2: "Any new explication of trinitarian faith should make faith more credible and acceptable, but it will do so only by taking on the whole truth present in accepted explications *and going beyond them*" (emphasis added).

Boff bases his arguments around the notion of community as he experiences it in his work with the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*. His entire theology is derived from his understanding that human praxis is prior to and informs all theology.[31] Boff argues repeatedly that his model of a triune god is based upon and determined by his model of human community. Moltmann, on the other hand, seeks to maintain a connection between his concept of the triune god and the historical development of the trinity. This forces him to begin with the orthodox categories and ultimately stand within the tradition.

Boff postulates a society based on equality, justice and compassion. If this is the ideal for humanity and humanity is created in the image of the Creator, then the Creator must exist as a community in solidarity. Furthermore, Boff claims that, historically, belief in a monistic God led to oppression and injustice. Societies in different eras have been influenced by faith communities that emphasize different aspects of the trinity. Those that stress the importance of the father tend to be monarchical and hierarchical, those that stress the importance of the son tend to deny the existence of the transcendent, and those that stress the spirit tend to be otherwordly. In his experience in *comunidades de base*, Boff has discovered that there must be an equal emphasis on each member of the godhead. Thus, his notion of an ideal community, his belief that humanity is created in the image of god and his historical analysis of human praxis inevitably leads him to emphasize the perichoretic triunity of god.

In contrast, Moltmann's starting point and conclusions are based upon his understanding of the relationship between the praxis of God in human history and his

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[31] For a description of these communities and an analysis of their socio-political implications, see Leonardo Boff, Church: Charism and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1990), 131f.

profound exegetical analysis of scripture. Because he apprehends, like Karl Barth, the dangers in pelagianism and anthropocentricism, Moltmann steers away from human praxis in his formulation of the Trinity as much as possible, preferring instead to speak of the praxis of God. As a result there is a sense in which his Trinitarian theology conveys the imperative to construct a paradigm distancing itself from human consequences. This is the basis of the critique that his theology is too analytical, abstract, and insensitive to the conflict and suffering in human history. The assumption is that he tends to treat conflict and suffering as abstract theological concepts with little connection to the real world. Here human praxis, if it exists at all in Moltmann, is 'the second act.' Boff, on the other hand, begins with the reality of human social relationships as experienced in his daily life and uses this background as a necessary corrective to a model of the Trinity as deduced from salvation history. From this starting point, Boff's theology of the triune God is valid only when integrated within the concrete setting of community. In this way his is a theology derived from and steeped in a tangible experience of human suffering. It is a theology "which is done by poor, disadvantaged, and oppressed people as they assert their God-given dignity and claim their rights as human beings."[32] With Boff, theology becomes 'the second act' following human encounter with the divine mystery; in this respect it is diametrically opposite Moltmann. A critical key to Boff's model is the belief that, "human society is a pointer on the road to the mystery of the Trinity, while the mystery of the Trinity, as we know it from revelation, is a

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[32] John W. De Gruchy, "Liberation Theology: A Reduction of the Gospel?" in Incarnational Ministry: The Presence of Christ in Church, Society, and Family, Essays in Honor of Ray S. Anderson, ed. Christian D. Kettler and Todd H. Speidell, (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1990), 178.

pointer towards social life and its archetype."[33] Yet, Boff, aware that he is open to criticism

for being utopian and ignoring analytical exegesis and theory, also provides a necessary

corrective by reminding us that the "Trinity is not something thought out to explain human

problems . . . . It is the revelation of God as God is. . . ."[34] This is his attempt to provide a

bridge between theological language—the eternally triune God—and human experience, the

act of God in history.

Moltmann, while espousing praxis, appears to be bound to a *theory* of praxis. Amid

his struggle to understand the suffering in the world, Moltmann, by beginning with the

suffering of the godhead, appears hesitant to deal with the reality that those who suffer are

concrete human beings whose dignity demands protection. In a sense he co-opts the suffering

of individuals and communities for the sake of a theocentric theology of "a crucified God."

Boff, living and laboring in South America, internalized his paradigm in a culture and

religion that emphasizes a communitarian vision over against an individualistic one. It is

natural for him to function from the position of "from the many is derived the one."

Furthermore, living with suffering and conflict on a daily basis leads one to question the very

foundation upon which society is built. With little or no investment in mainstream

associations, Boff is able to be revolutionary in his acts and thoughts. While such a paradigm

may speak to the situation in third world and oppressed countries, it is perceived as extremist

by those operating from a first world context predominantly rational in its outlook.

Furthermore, it causes difficulties especially for those operating under the paradigm: 'from

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[33] Boff, Trinity and Society, 119.

[34] Ibid., 3.

the one is derived the many.'

Boff has gone beyond tradition in many ways in advocating a Gaia-god relationship between humanity and the cosmos. His vision of the earth as mother is complementary to many indigenous beliefs. He comes close to ascribing a deistic role to earth and moon and sun and stars—indeed to the entire world. And yet because of this he is able to dialogue more freely regarding evolution and the role of cosmos genesis in the creation of the world. Moltmann, on the other hand stands within tradition.

In comparing Boff and Moltmann, one can conclude that the practical results of their Trinitarian theologies is similar. Both argue for the existence of a perichoretic godhead; both acknowledge a panentheistic model of the universe; both explore a theological anthropology based upon their understanding of the sociality intrinsic to the godhead. The major point of difference between the two is their use of praxis. Whereas Boff begins with the present praxis of humanity and applies that experience to the development of a theory of god—in which case theology is the second act; Moltmann begins with the revelation of Jesus. Thus, the praxis Moltmann explores is the praxis of the triune godhead in human history, in contrast to the praxis of humanity in present history. This fundamental difference informs their ultimate social agendas as well as their conception of the role each member of the trinity exercises in today's world. For all their differences, Boff and Moltmann propose doctrines of the Trinity remarkably alike and essentially complementary. The practical consequences of their models will be explored next.

A Social Doctrine of the Trinity

In this section, I will explore the practical consequences for humanity of a social

doctrine of the godhead. The construction of a coherent model of sociality is dependent upon first defining the nature of perichoresis, one way of expressing the eternal inner relationship between the persons of the godhead. Once perichoresis is established as essential, a social construction of the triune godhead is possible. Inasmuch as Christian theology upholds the concept of the *imago Dei*, it follows that a social construction of the godhead can be extrapolated to humanity; hence, it becomes possible to develop an understanding of the triune godhead as a paradigm for human society. As a paradigm for society, a social doctrine of the Trinity supports the values of egalitarianism and diversity in unity. Throughout this section I will allude to the points of contact between a *Mexica* understanding of the Creator and Boff and Moltmann's social construction of the Trinity.

Perichoresis

Theologians, from the sixth century, embraced St. John of Damascus' profound doctrine of the eternal *perichoresis* (περιχώρησις) of the trinitarian Persons. This Trinitarian theology summed up the doctrine of the late fourth century Cappadocian theologians, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and St. Gregory of Nyssa, and further developed the concept of *perichoresis* as a way of expressing the inner-Trinitarian relations. The Greek term *perichoresis* literally means "a proceeding around" and portrays each person of the godhead containing the other two, each one permeating the others and then permeated by them, one living in the other and vice-versa. The term was translated into Latin by Burgundio of Pisa as *circumincessio*, which means the active interpenetration of one with the others, and *circuminsessio* which means being statically or ecstatically in one another. The scriptural reason for this understanding is found in John 10:30: "The Father and I are one."

In understanding the divine life of God perichoretically, God can no longer be understood as a single divine person, subject or essence. Instead, the godhead must be understood as consisting of the living, eternal fellowship of the three who are related to one another and only exist in one another. That is, God can only exist and be understood as a diverse community. The unity of the three cannot lie in the one lordship of the Creator; it is found only in the "unity of their tri-unity." In this concept there is no place for the priority of "person," "essence," or "nature." Consequently, the "monarchy of the Father," "subordination of the Son and Spirit" or "modes of being" is not valid when speaking of the eternal circulation of the divine life, for it has no place "in the perichoretic unity of the Trinity."[35]

> [Perichoresis] grasps the circulatory character of the eternal divine life. . . . By virtue of their eternal love they live in one another to such an extent, that they are one. . . . Through the personal characteristics that distinguish them from one another, the Father, the Son and the Spirit dwell in one another and communicate eternal life to one another. . . . In their perichoresis and because of it, the trinitarian persons are not to be understood as three different individuals, who only subsequently enter into relationship with one another. . . . The unity of the triunity lies in the eternal perichoresis of the trinitarian persons.[36]

> This implies accepting–and this is my basic thesis–that the three divine Persons are simultaneous in origin and co-exist eternally in communion and interpenetration. Each is distinct from the others in personal characteristics and in the communion established by that Person in everlasting relationship with the others, each revealing that Person's self to itself and the self of the others to them.[37]

This term perichoresis and the notions it fosters allows God to be described strictly in

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[35] Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 176.

[36] Ibid., 174-75.

[37] Boff, Trinity and Society, 142.

a Trinitarian manner: the permanent interpenetration, the eternal co-relatedness, the self-surrender of each person to the other form the Trinitarian union, the union of the godhead.

The Social Trinity: Community

In The Trinity and the Kingdom of God, Moltmann develops his doctrine of the Trinity founded on the essential love of God discerned in the mutual relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit and which, in the perichoresis of the divine persons becomes the prototype of the community of human beings and all creation. Thus, with the mutual suffering of the Father, Son and Spirit as the framework of an open system whereby all are eternally in communion, his model of the Trinity is built upon a communitarian vision of God. The three persons live in a permanent and everlasting reciprocity which in turn opens out to and embraces the whole of creation. God is always and everlastingly a community of Persons reaching out to creation and not simply the one. The unity of God exists and is to be spoken of only in the context of communion between the three Persons and with human history.

Boff, adopting the thesis that the Trinity is the true paradigm of sociality, claims that only a social doctrine of the Trinity is capable of providing theologies of liberation a greater theological depth and practical aims for church and society.[38] This is perhaps a natural consequence of his experience in communitarian societies such as those he encounters in base communities. His reasoning challenges both the classical approaches to the Trinity and recent approaches. Instead, he claims that it is the social model of the triune godhead that serves as the model for a pluralistic human society; the "prototype . . . dreamed of by those

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[38] The fellowship of the triune God is the basis of Boff's doctrine of God; but only because it is the foundation first of his doctrine of ecclesiology.

who wish to improve society."[39] Detecting serious inherent limitations in classic and modern

approaches, Boff explains that "their dominant tone of thought is either metaphysical or

personalist."[40] That is, they are based either on the category of substance—the nature or

essence of God—or on that of person—God as subject or subsistant. In contrast, theologies

of liberation begin with the act of God in human history—the praxis of God—as it relates to

human praxis and is experienced within living communities of human beings. As

experienced in these communities, the act of God is the act of the economic Trinity. It is this

triune God who "offers a response to the great quest for participation, equality and

communion that fires the understanding of the oppressed."[41]

Subsequent to his appraisal of the economy of salvation, Boff reexamines his concept

of God and proposes a model of the immanent Trinity whereby the nature of God, as God

exists in God's inner self, is one of three wholly distinct person's constituted in a

permanently interpermeating relationship or communion. The three persons can only exist in

this dynamic relationship. The primordial God, who is also the triune God, must always be a

society of three interrelated in an act of *perichoresis* and communion from the very

beginning. Hence, God's true nature is one of "infinite communing," described by Boff as:

> *Presence one to another*: . . . implies presenting one self to another and offering a
> welcome to another. . . . *Reciprocity*: communion implies movement of two hands
> clasping each other. It cannot come from one side alone . . . . There will never be
> fusion, since each retains its own identity, but the desire for fusion, to become one
> with the other, marks the depth of the communing relationship. . . . *Immediacy*:

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[39] Ibid., 7.

[40] Ibid., 118. "Modern theological thoughts start from God as an absolute subject actualized in the three distinct modes of existence (Barth) or in three distinct modes of subsistence (Rahner)." Ibid., 137.

[41] Ibid., 11.

one being wants to be with another, in itself, through its own presence, without intermediaries; wants to be for the other to the point of being in the other . . . . *Community*: the product of relationships of communion is community; this implies living together, valuing the individuality of everyone, accepting differences as the interchange of riches, establishing personal relationships, doing away with formalities. . . .[42]

In this respect communing is a relationship between beings or persons that "builds up the highest sort of socializing and union."[43] Boff proceeds to describe the nature of the communion between the persons of the godhead in analytical, philosophical and theological terms. Analytically, in communion one with another, one being is present to another, perceives a basic reciprocity with that other, and experiences an immediacy of relationship demanding the formation of a community.[44] Philosophically, the communion that exists between the persons of the godhead demonstrates an existence characterized principally by oneness and by a self-transcendence that allows the formation of an 'us' with whom to relate.[45] "Theologically this means that the values and modes of being associated with communion find their deepest roots and ultimate model in God." This model of communion posits a God that is the ideal of "absolute openness, supreme presence, total immediacy, eternal transcendence and infinite communion."[46]

Notwithstanding the similarities in their social models, it is clear that, whereas Boff begins with a community vision that informs his prescience of God, Moltmann begins with a

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[42] Ibid., 129ff (Emphasis in original).

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 131.

[45] Ibid., 130-31.

[46] Ibid., 131.

social vision of God that informs his model for society. I suggest that the *perichoresis-communion* model depicted by Boff is the best way of expressing the revelation of the Trinity as communicated in Christian scripture and witnessed in the world. The understanding of perichoresis and the at-oneness of the triune Creator also illuminates the *Nahuatl* perspective of *Ometéotl* as the one who is now and ever will be *in tloque in nahuaque*. It is also consistent with the *Nahuatl* understanding of the relationship between the Creator and humanity. The idea of perichoresis speaks to the heart of the *Nahuatl* speaking peoples understanding of the multiple nature of the Creator-god and its seemingly compulsive need for sustenance and maintenance. The mythos of ancient Mesoamerica idealized a single Creator-god capable of existence as multiple possibilities and manifestations. As expressed above in Chapter 4, ontologically, this god is only capable of existing as a triumvirate of possibilities. It was only when these ideals became infused with the *Mexica* marital-mysticism, that they were corrupted and ostensibly became the reason for the increased warfare and subsequent human sacrifice practiced by the *Mexica*. Prior to this corruption, *Ometéotl* served as a metaphor for the dual and contrary forces that permeated the cosmos. The *Mexica* used this complicated metaphor and poetry as the language and symbolic life-force required for instructing the community about the creation of the universe and the ever present reality of *Ometéotl*.

The Trinity as Paradigm for Society: Moltmann claims that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity provides the intellectual means to harmonize personality and sociality in the community of human beings without sacrificing the one to the other. Because the triune God is intrinsically and ontologically bound up with Godself, then Father, Son and Spirit must

have always co-existed as a single society and never existed apart from one another. This reality was revealed to the world by the Son. Human beings, therefore, created in the image and likeness of God, are also meant for this "infinite communing." As an analogy, humans are able to join and get out of communities, but are unable to get out of or opt out of the human race; there is no way to cease to be a human. This is the equivalent of the Trinity for humanity. Accordingly, for God and human beings, reality can only be radically social. That is: "the basic social category is not the individual but the society." This was earlier expressed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he defined the ontic "I-thou" relationship between two or more persons as the basic social category.[47] In terms of the ethical mandate facing humanity, the concept of the absolute individual is "an abstraction with no corresponding reality."[48] Authentic personhood can only be construed by direct involvement of the Son and Spirit as the divine mediator between persons. With the Son and Spirit as mediator, the "I-thou person-in-community" is the only possible way to understand personhood. In this community, each human "thou" is the image of God's "thou"—where God meets humanity. Just as the unity of the godhead springs from the self-giving of the Son "for many," the essential characteristic of each person is to be for the others, through the others, with the

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[47] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Communion of Saints: A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociality of the Church, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 33-37. His first two books, The Communion of Saints and Act and Being, trans. Ernst Wolf, (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), written as a doctoral dissertation and habilitation respectively, demonstrate how Bonhoeffer contended with questions of human sociality and originally resolved them in the dogmatic postulate "Christ exists as a community of persons." In Communion of Saints he wrestled with the problem of finding a connection between the reality of God and the reality of the world while maintaining the difference. He saw the basic issue as "the relation between the person, God, and social being." (Communion of Saints, 36.) Beginning with ecclesiology, Bonhoeffer formulated a doctrine of the church that declared that because Christ is in, with, and under human sociality, humans find self-fulfillment exclusively in being with and for others.

[48] Bonhoeffer, Act and Being, 130.

others and in the others.[49] Furthermore, in this act for the other, humanity is in conformity

with God. Human beings do not exist in themselves for themselves: the "in themselves" is

"for the others." It is precisely here that the absolute ethic of the 'thou' of the other makes its

demand upon me. To reject that demand is to reject God.[50]

The *Imago Dei* and Society: Boff argues that human society carries within it a

vestigium Trinitatis. The idea that the image of God can be found solely in human

individuality is a false one; rather, the *imago Dei* is found fundamentally in human sociality.

This being the case, it is affirmed that a person is conformed to the image of God only in

fellowship with other persons: "In the image of God he created them; male and female he

created them" (Gen. 1.27, New Revised Standard Version).

> It is not the soul of the individual person, detached from the body, which is *imago Dei*, God's image. *Imago Dei* are men and women in their wholeness, in their full, sexually specific community with one another. . . . God is not perceived and known in the innermost chamber of the heart, or at the solitary apex of the human soul. . . . He is known in the true human community of men and women, parents and children. . . . The place for the experience of God is not the mystical experience of the self; it is *the social experience of the self* and *the personal experience of sociality*.[51]

For this reason men and women can be defined as being in conformity with the *imago*

Dei only in communion and relation to other men and women. Ontologically, being a person

can only mean existing-in-relationship.

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[49] "It is in the unity with one another which springs from the self-giving of the Son 'for many' that men and women are in conformity with the triune God." Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, xvi. See also Boff, Trinity and Society, 6,7.

[50] Cf. Gustavo Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells: The Spiritual Journey of a People (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 97: "To reject a fellow human . . . is to reject God as well."

[51] Moltmann, Spirit of Life, 94 (emphasis in original).

<u>A Paradigm For Egalitarianism</u>: The community of the triune godhead becomes the model for the human community aspired to by those who desire to transform society and create it in such a way that it corresponds to the image and likeness of the Creator. The non-person struggles for justice and participation in all levels of life, "for a just and egalitarian sharing while respecting the differences between persons and groups."[52] In seeking this justice, the non-person seeks communion with the Creator; in seeking communion with the Creator, the non-person seeks solidarity with people and cultures. Those who are oppressed are in one sense seeking after God-in-community as the ultimate meaning of their subjective history and existence.

A perichoresis-communion model of the godhead allows us to speak out against oppression and for liberation from racism, sexism, and classism. This model of sociality encourages people to overcome sexist language, racist thinking, and class division. "It leads to a fellowship of men and women without privilege and subjection, for in fellowship with the first-born brother, there is no longer male or female, Jew or Gentile, free or slave, but all are one in Christ, and joint heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3.28f.)."[53] Understanding that the Son is the "first-born of all creation" leads to the knowledge that the Son is brother and sister of all humans. Created in this image, all humanity is elevated, making all human beings more divine.

<u>Diversity in Unity</u>: In postulating a society formed after the image and likeness of the triune godhead, it is the triune God who provides the societal principle that creates

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[52] Boff, <u>Trinity and Society</u>, 7.

[53] Moltmann, <u>Trinity and the Kingdom</u>, 165.

differences and communion. Such a society works from the paradigm: from the many is derived the one, in contrast to the model which states: from the one is derived the many. This social paradigm can be utilized as a model for a just, egalitarian and diverse social organization. Diversity in unity is the fundamental tenet of trinitarian thinking. "The trinitarian concept of community envisages *diversity in unity* from the very outset. To create community does not merely mean uniting what is different. It differentiates the One as well."[54] In this paradigm, unity can never imply negation of differences or the reduction of all persons to one. Instead, unity expresses *perichoresis*—the communion and interpermeation of all the different threads of life. Analogously, the triune godhead is not simply expressed as difference one from another; the godhead is irreducible one to another, a unique and non-interchangeable part of the whole.

> Trinity is inclusive because it unites what is separated and excluded (the Father-Son duality). . . . 'Three' needs to be understood not so much as a number as an affirmation that the name of God means differences that include, not exclude, each other; that are not opposed to each other, since they are set in communion; a distinction that makes for union.[55]

It is clearly their unity in diversity "that enables their communion, reciprocity and mutual revelation to come about."[56]

The Role of the Spirit

This section will explore the relationship between the Christian understanding of

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[54] Moltmann, Spirit of Life, 219-20. "To create community does not mean establishing uniformity. It means a richer variety of examples and species, for with every new reality the scope of what is possible increases," Ibid., 226.

[55] Boff, Trinity and Society, 3.

[56] Ibid., 140.

Holy Spirit, the Hebrew concept of Shekinah and the *Nahuatl* understanding of *ollin*. Even

though the medieval theologians who spiritually conquered the Americas found no concept in

Nahuatl philosophical categories that corresponded to their understanding of the Holy Spirit,

I am intrigued by the possibility that the Christian understanding of Spirit, especially as

formulated by Boff and Moltmann, parallels the *Nahuatl* philosophical concept of *ollin*. In

this section, therefore, I proclaim the Spirit and *ollin* as the *power of the new* and of *renewal*

in all creation. Once understood in this way, it follows that revelation of the godhead is

possible only through the renewed creation represented by humanity in community.

The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology

The relationship between the Father and the Son is always complemented by the third

person, the bridge that integrates all, the Spirit—the Lord and giver of life. The Spirit is "the

principle of union, communion, and reconciliation of all persons with others and with God."[57]

> The Spirit is *the glorifying God*. The Spirit is *the unifying God*. In this respect the
> Spirit is not an energy proceeding from the Father or from the Son; it is a subject
> from whose activity the Son and the Father receive their glory and their union . . .
> The Holy Spirit means *the subject* who glorifies the Father and the Son, and unites
> the Father and the Son. . . .[58]

Likewise, humans are connected as beings-in-relationship through the work of the Spirit.

The goal and mission of the triune God—in Godself and in human history—is to bring all

beings into its communion through the mediation of the Son and the life-giving, driving force

of the Holy Spirit. This is done in fulfillment of the promise that all humanity should

conform to and possess 'the image of God;' the image of beings-in-relationship. It is the

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[57] Boff, Church, Charism, and Power, 149.

[58] Moltmann, Trinity and the Kingdom, 126-27 (emphasis in original).

Spirit that integrates, liberates and infuses life into relationships, allowing humanity to develop into 'beings-in-relationship.' With the life the Spirit infuses into it, the community becomes a living, breathing organism; a unity created from the many. This perichoretic at-oneness of the triune God is comparable to and corresponds with the experience of the community of humanity as mediated by the godhead. This community is the community which the Spirit unites through infusion of respect, affection and love.[59] In Boff's view there is no person or society that can organize life without "cultivating the inner regions (the Spirit) where creativity comes from and where the dreams that can transform history are worked out."[60]

The *Nahuatl* Understanding of Spirit as *Ollin*

The perichoretic concept of interpermeation and eternal movement one around the other is somewhat analogous to the *Nahuatl* concept of *ollin*, or movement. In the indigenous cultures of ancient Mesoamerica, there was an appreciation for the dynamic and living relationship that existed between the human spirit and the universe—also understood as *ollin*, resonance or vibration.[61] This is the central belief that the universe is and must continue to be in constant flux or motion. This motion, resonance or vibration permeates all of creation, including the godhead, holds all being together—albeit in a fluid and tumultuous way—and allows humanity a purposeful role in creation. López Austin explains that the animistic entity *teyolia* is derived from the words *ollin*, movement; *yol*, life; *yollo*, heart; and

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[59] Ibid., 157.

[60] Boff, Trinity and Society, 15.

[61] Joseph Rael, Being and Vibration (Tulsa, Okla.: Council Oak Books, 1993).

olol, roundness.[62] Philologically, the qualities of vitality, knowledge, tendency or inclination, and affection can be attributed to *yollo* and by extension to *ollin.* *Ollin* is the dynamism that drives all living beings—to lose *ollin* is to cease to exist.[63] Hence, as in the primordial *Mexica* creation story, the world could not endure if the sun did not continue its path in the heavens. As a fundamental source of power and animation, *ollin* flows through all living organisms, including humanity, and connects the multiple underworlds with this world and the heavens. Energy flows up out of the earth, in the form of *malinalli,* spiraling towards the heavens. Ever-moving energy, comprehended as resonance and vibration, is at once a source of fear and a source of enchantment.

The *Shekinah* as Spirit

In early rabbinic literature, "Holy Spirit" was not a term for God; rather, it referred to the "spirit of the sanctuary," the "medium of revelation and a qualification for a sanctified ministry."[64] The idea of the *Shekinah* developed out of cultic language and originally referred to God's "tabernacle," tent, or Gods "dwelling" among the people. As a cultic construction, it is consistent with the *Nahuatl* understanding of an immanent Creator, one who is both near and close, one who dwells alongside and among the community. In this context, the *Shekinah* is not a divine attribute; it is the presence of Godself at a particular place and at a particular time.[65] To Israel, *Shekinah,* refers to the settling of God in and suffering with the

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[62] López Austin, 211f

[63] Recall that when the *teyolia* (a concept derived from the principle of *ollin*) leaves the body a person dies.

[64] Moltmann, Spirit of Life, 47.

[65] Ibid., 48.

community of Israel at one specific place and era of humanity in history.

> The idea of the Shekinah includes these three aspects: the present *indwelling* of the Lord in Israel; the form assumed by the *condescension* of the Eternal One; and the *anticipations* of the glory of the One who is to come. Through his Shekinah God is present in Israel. Together with Israel he suffers persecutions. Together with Israel he goes into exile as a prisoner. Together with the martyrs he experiences the torments of death.[66]

Today we understand that the Spirit of the Creator is the life-force of all created beings and the provider of the living space in which they can grow and develop their potentialities.[67] We see that the Spirit is sent to all places at all times. Present in the whole of humanity, it works in everyone, of whatever culture or religion. It "dwells in multiplicity, takes on diversity, creating a movement of communion and convergence from within the immensity of human diversity."[68] The life-force of the Spirit is the life-force which made possible the resurrection of Christ and which is now "poured out on all flesh" in order to make it eternally alive and eternally new. In making all things eternally new, the influence of the Spirit in the world is creative and oriented toward the eschatological culmination of history. In this sense, the Spirit is primarily action and transformation, hence the connection with the *Nahuatl* concept of *ollin*. With respect to humanity, the Spirit's mission is the transformation and bringing of persons into conformity with the *imago Dei* by liberating them from the oppression brought about by social structures and persons that would distort their humanity. In this way the Spirit-*ollin* is the power that heals broken humanity,

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[66] Moltmann, <u>Trinity and the Kingdom</u>, 28 (emphasis in original).

[67] Moltmann, <u>Spirit of Life</u>, 84.

[68] Comblin, 141.

empowering persons to be incorporated into the community where they are now free as 'beings-in-relationship.'

The Community of Believers

The Spirit brings this liberation into the world through action. Its action flows into human actions, giving them power and making them a creative force for transformation and healing. "The Spirit is creativity and the spirit of innovation in a group, but never in an individualistic sense or for self-advancement, always for strengthening the community in working to fulfill its needs."[69] When we recall that the finding of "flower water,"attaining true wisdom, occurs only through conforming human will to the will of the one who is *in tloque in nahuaque*, we can begin to comprehend the importance of *ollin* as a means of transforming the yearning of the heart into the movement of the heart, passion, for the benefit of the entire community. I suggest that we can now, therefore, proclaim the Spirit-*ollin* as the *power of the new* and of *renewal* in all creation. Once this is understood, it follows that **revelation of the godhead is only possible through the renewed creation represented by community**.

The Spirit of the godhead, at work in all creation, is made manifest in human history through human <u>action</u>. Through the movement of the spirit-*ollin*, the revelation of the godhead is concretized and made visible in human community.[70] Simultaneously, this community is the place that becomes the structure in the world which acts as the recipient of the Creator's revelation. Resonance, vibration and *ollin* become the means by which the

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[69] Boff, <u>Trinity and Society</u>, 194-95.

[70] This is done by the Spirit that is "in the community of those who follow Jesus." ibid., 207.

Spirit transforms the community of believers into the new receptacle for receiving the revelation of the godhead. The distinction between "thinking of revelation individualistically and thinking of it in relation to community is fundamental."[71] It is the work of the Spirit resonating through the community that vivifies it—opening it up to free the community to receive and understand the revelation of the godhead. It then becomes the responsibility of the community to complete the inner logic of the historical mandate and proceed from simply being the recipient of that revelation to becoming incarnate to the world as is the redeemer.[72] In Christian terms, the Son who *was* incarnate, continues to be incarnate today via replication through the resonating work of the Spirit present in community. The community then becomes the visible structure acting as the vehicle of God's revelation *to the world*. This is manifest and concretized in the relationship of one to another within the community and in relationship of the community to the world. It is only possible when and where the vivifying *ollin* of the Spirit acts as the integrating force for conciliation.

The Sociality of the Incarnate Community

As stated above, the revelation of the godhead continues to be replicated today through the Spirit present in the community. The depiction of the historical, triune godhead dwelling within the community in the presence of the *Shekinah* is a useful parallel to our hypothesis that the community of the faithful becomes the visible structure acting as the agent, recipient and mediator of revelation; a revelation that, as part of God's act in history, is

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[71] Bonhoeffer, Act and Being, 122.

[72] Ray S. Anderson, Historical Transcendence and the Reality of God: A Christological Critique (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 80.

always a concrete event in history. If, as Bonhoeffer postulates, the community of believers is the community which literally exists in the world as a 'sociological structure of reality,' then this community can only be 'revealed' in its true nature by applying its empirical structure as an actual event in history. This is a natural consequence of the incarnation of the Son. Only via this event—the incarnation—is God's transcendence not reducible to metaphysics or to mere objective information. The key that allows us to make this formulation is the understanding that the structure of reality that exists historically in the incarnation is extended anew by every generation *through the Spirit* into the community as Christ's <u>ontic</u> presence.[73] Furthermore because the social dimension of community that manifests itself concretely in history is also the theological dimension, authentic personhood can only be construed by the direct involvement of the Spirit of God as divine mediator. The orthopathic reality of God, therefore, must constitute every social relation. Consequently through the work of the resonating Spirit in forming, liberating, and proclaiming the community as the ontic presence of the Creator, God, persons, community and creation—everything that makes up society—"intrinsically cohere in the concrete social relation."[74]

What emerges is a real social perichoresis. Again, this is consistent with the ancient Mesoamerican understanding of the Creator and the Creator's relationship with humanity.

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[73] Hence we cannot be concerned solely with "an ontological exploration of reality," that is, **being** in the abstract. To do so is considered a "retreat from the ontic dimension of person-hood." Ray S. Anderson, <u>Historical Transcendence</u>, 80. See also Bonhoeffer: "The abandonment of the ontic by retreat upon the ontological is considered inadmissable by revelation,"<u>Act and Being</u>, 74. We preserve the ontological status of revelation as the knowledge of God's being and the transcendental character of revelation as the act of God by revealing a faith-filled community as the locale where revelation occurs.

[74] Anderson, <u>Historical Transcendence</u>, 77.

As the one who is *in tloque in nahuaque*, the Creator was certainly not perceived as a god who is detached from human affairs. Everything aspect of life is infused with *in tloque in nahuaque,* 'the one who is near to everything and to whom everything is near.' Furthermore, this coherence extends to and through the cosmos and forms a concrete relationship between humanity and the world.

Constructing an Indigenous Theological Anthropology

In the *Nahuatl* speaking world, to be human was to be *macehuale*—deserved by penitence—and subject to the original creative sacrifice of the gods for the benefit of humanity.[75] Understood in this way, humanity was bound forever to repay the initial sacrifice of the gods with a similar sacrifice in order to assure the continuation of the cosmos. Responsibility for the maintenance of the spiritual and physical worlds permeated *Mexica* thinking. When entangled with the *Mexica* state ideology that promoted martial mysticism, this cosmic responsibility generated sacrificial rituals appalling to the modern mind. The original understanding of humanity's indebtedness to the Creator, as transmitted by the *Tolteca*, emphasized the formation of humanity via ritual discipline, sacrifice and knowledge of *flor y canto*—flower and song. Taking place in the presence of the ever-present Creator, formation of personhood was an expected byproduct of creation. Furthermore, this process was possible only in the context of a community of similarly formed persons.

In Christian theology, humanness—being before the godhead—is ultimately and intimately grounded in the nature of humanity. Theologically, personhood is anchored in the

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[75] León-Portilla explains that humans appear as the result of *Quetzalcoatl's* penitence. Hence, humans were called *macehuales*, "those deserved by penitence," León-Portilla, Aztec Image, 8.

Creator's right or claim on all humanity as human beings. This claim is a by-product of the creation of humanity "in God's image" (Gen. 1:26f NRSV).[76] Created "in God's image" suggests more than being <u>like</u> God; rather it suggests <u>being</u> based upon God.[77] In both the Christian and *Nahuatl* constructs, humanity is not created to be like the Creator; humanity is created with the intention that each human base their entire being upon the creator, to be in correspondence with the image of the one who is *in tloque in nahuaque*. When the relationship between the Creator and the created is one of "likeness of God," humanity is created to do something.

The "image of God" is not a quality or a <u>concept</u> of being, but is concretely observed in history as being in <u>relationship</u>.[78] To the degree that humanity stands in this relationship it bears the image of God. As a result, the image of God must always be experienced as a differentiation of being. Being-based-upon-God can never be other than being-for-the-other person, true correspondence.[79] As Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated in his passage on Gen. 1.26:

> Man is free by the fact that creature is related to creature. Man is not alone, he is in duality and it is in duality and is in this dependence on the other that his creatureliness consists.[80]

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[76] See Gen. 1.26f.; 5.1; 9.6; 1 Cor. 11.7; and James 3.9.

[77] Each human person exists in the image and likeness of God. The image of God is a gift or endowment which takes place in the concrete and particular existence of each person. Therefore the so called right to life is qualified by this gift of life. See Ray S. Anderson, <u>On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology</u> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 71.

[78] Not only the relationship to God, but the relationship to all three spheres of ecology: God, oneself, and the world.

[79] Indeed, true correspondence with God cannot occur without experiencing the image of God as differentiation of being.

[80] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, <u>Creation and Fall; Temptation: Two Biblical Studies</u>, (New York: MacMillan, 1958), 38. Bonhoeffer was here speaking of the male-female duality as "image of God", in

To Bonhoeffer, the "I-thou" person in community is the only person possible. A solitary person cannot bear the image and likeness of God. If the act of being created in the image and likeness of God establishes an inviolability of the person, that image is concretely expressed in living out human relationships—in being with and for the 'other-as-subject' in a relationship of parity and reciprocity.

Existence in the world displays many sorts of relationships, each with its own characteristic. The essential humanity of all people with and before God is ultimately and intimately grounded in adhering to a holistic construct of humanity itself. The value of any persons life is always a value of the self as a unity of life in what has been formulated as the three-fold ecological orientation.[81] The ecological spheres are composed of the "I-thou," the "I-self" and the "I-it." The sphere of the "I-thou," or humanity-community, emphasizes that human life has value as a part in relationship to the whole because "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2.18, NRSV). The "I-self," or ones essential psychic and psychological identity, declares that, as formed in community of selves, a human life has value as a unique and unrepeatable self-conscious "will to live and right to live." The "I-it," or the world, affirms that human life has value as creaturely existence on the earth and as part of the cosmos. Each of these three relationships in and if themselves produce either self-awareness or *dialogue*. This is but a mere shadow of what the Creator intended for humanity. Only when the "I-thou-we" is mediated by the Spirit-*ollin* and integrated into a community

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other places he expands this to include all humankind. See also Community of Saints, where Bonhoeffer proclaims that Christ exists as a community of persons.

[81] Ray S. Anderson, Christians Who Counsel: The Vocation of Holistic Therapy (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 38-42.

with the godhead, is communion established. This communion is manifest concretely as the relationship between the I, the thou, and the Creator that produces the ultimate *we*. This ultimate *we* is the community of Christ intrinsically cohering with the entire cosmos—in an orthopathic sense—in the concrete social relation.

If love corresponds to the perichoretic unity of the triune God, as it is manifested and experienced in the history of salvation, solidarity in human society provides correspondence. Now we can provide a basis for a social ethic applicable contextually via a historical continuity of being—a community modeled after the triune God. Such a community is what Gutiérrez refers to as the "utopia of life."

> In search of this utopia, an entire people—with all its traditional values and the wealth of its recent experience—has taken to the path of building a world in which persons are more important than things and in which all can live with dignity, a society that respects human freedom when it is in the service of a genuine common good, and exercises no kind of coercion, from whatever source.[82]

As previously God was emptied into the community of Israel, in God's *pathos* God is today emptied, entering into the chosen community. This self-emptying or pathos of the godhead is accomplished via the mediation of the Spirit of the triune God. The pathos of God is the free relationship of passionate participation—God with humanity, humanity with itself.

Conclusion

Working with the models of Boff and Moltmann and integrating Bonhoeffer's understanding of social relations, a social doctrine of the Trinity based upon the perichoresis-

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[82] Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells, 27.

communion model has been developed. The *Mexica* idea of the godhead existing as a multiplicity of possibilities and the concept of *ollin* are two areas that parallel Trinitarian thinking and share the social ramifications of this way of thinking. Likewise, the *Mexica* construct of humanity in dynamic relationship with the cosmos is consistent with a perichoresis-communion model of humanity in relationship to God and the cosmos; although concretely, the *Mexica* were never able to understand the reason for a third person of the godhead. Furthermore, it is grounded in and permits thinking analogous to Bonhoeffer's understanding of relationships and communities. Collectively, Moltmann, Boff and Bonhoeffer suggest that the social doctrine of the godhead is the fundamental model for all social systems.

In the inner life of the Creator—grounded by the Spirit in the community—the continued presence and work of the Spirit-*ollin* in the world constitutes the praxis of the community now understood as a receptacle for receiving revelation. The resonating Spirit incorporates humanity into the praxis of the death, resurrection and re-creation of the cosmos by making the community an incarnational presence in the world. In this way, those in communion with God are pathically dedicated in solidarity with all men and women in a common humanity. Liberation, consecration, and empowerment constitute the praxis of the Spirit-*ollin* of the community of the faithful where the Creator continues to stand with oppressed human beings against all that would oppress them. Ultimately, the Spirit-*ollin* brings the life of the eternal godhead to humanity and leads human history to concrete life on this earth and eschatologically "in the land of the resurrected." All this is done "for the sake

of the transformation of the world. . . . ;"[83] a world which becomes the eternal relation between God and humanity concretized as social being.

According to Boff, "this perichoresis of subjectivities can also be expressed in another way, according to the model of a basic ontological analysis of the 'I-thou' relationship."[84] Looking at the "I-thou" conception of sociality in a trinitarian way results in an orthopathic elaboration through the integrating work of the Spirit to embrace the "I-thou-we" in communion with God. What emerges is a real social perichoresis. The ecological spheres are composed of the "I-thou," the "I-self" and the "I-it." Each of the three formulations is consistent with and essential to the *Mexica* understanding and purpose of human formation as a making-face, making-heart. In essence the goal of all education, especially religious education, is the formation of human consciousness in the direction of the three ecological spheres. Each of the three spheres comprise what the *Nahuatl* speaking people understood as making-face, making-heart. Formulation of contemporary pedagogy based upon this holistic concept of humanity will allow the community to engage in further self-awareness, dialogue and development. Such a model is consistent with the purpose of people-making and the understanding of the Creator as expressed by the *Nahuatl* speaking peoples of ancient Mesoamerica. By formulating an indigenous model of education, Part IV will complete this task.

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[83] Comblin, 76.

[84] Boff, Trinity and Society, 116.

Part IV

Toward an Indigenous Pedagogy

Part IV of this project will fashion a holistic ecology of indigenous education

grounded in a *Nahuatl* model of sociality integrated with the perichoretic community-based

theological anthropology constructed in Chapter 6. Adapting Freire's popular-based, critical

pedagogy, I will then design a model of education rooted in an indigenous world-view, a

framework more consistent with a *Nahua* construct of society—residually oral, oriented

towards the cosmos and community-based. Popular-based pedagogy upholds the prerogative

of each culture to formulate and profess its own distinct symbol-making system—its own

identity. Furthermore, critical pedagogy allows people access to their particular

epistemological frameworks and meaningful traditions as they construct methods of

educating appropriate to their specific cultural paradigm. Recourse to a culture-specific

model will provide the Latino/a learner in the United States with a system of education that

parallels indigenous pedagogy. For this population, pedagogy grounded more deeply in an

indigenous framework of the cosmos is essential. I contend that it is culture-specific

pedagogy that, by taking day-to-day realities seriously, is capable of empowering the

Chicano/a learner to ultimately foster the emergence and preservation of a unique

complementary multiple-identity.

Chapter 7 is an examination and critique of the pedagogical methododology of Paulo

Freire. It will be shown that, while Freire's theory, practice and methods are compatible with

and practical for persons whose background is derived from the *Nahuatl* speaking people of

ancient Mesoamerica, a model more consistent with the indigenous framework out of which

the *Nahuatl* speaking people operate is preferred for recent immigrants to the United States, particularly those whose backgrounds and cultures are indigenous. This model will be constructed in Chapter 8. Fashioned around a vision of the cosmos in constant flux, *ollin,* and an understanding of humanity in balance—balance understood as equilibrium in motion—such pedagogy is the key to an effective paradigm of education for the Latino/a learner. By virtue of its historical link with the *Mexica,* its legitimacy is beyond reproach.

CHAPTER 7

A Pedagogy of the People

Components of a Critical Pedagogy

Paulo Freire, in contrast to traditional educational theorists and practitioners, concludes that the goal of education is cultural action for freedom and liberation.[1] On a practical level, the goal of education is cultural action because it is oriented toward the local community; moreover, it demands freedom and liberation because these are integral features of a teaching-learning cycle that restores dignity to all people. Freire arrived at his conclusions by means of a fundamental assumption that weaves its way through the corpus of his work. In Freire's opinion, all humans are capable of restoring their dignity by radically transforming their own lives and the life of the surrounding environment. In the context of a local community, the aim of transformation is the creation of a new, more just, society. Consequently, cultural action for freedom and liberation is concretized as transformation of the entire community in the direction of a new society. When effectively carried out, the consequences are in favor of the humanization of the human community.[2] Realistically, however, Freire recognized that, whereas the vocation of all humanity is humanization, dehumanization is an unfortunate option. Therefore, because education is never neutral, an effective educator must cease to be detached from the learner and make a choice in the

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[1] Freire, Cultural Action for Freedom

[2] Freire sometimes described this education as "the practice of freedom. Such a pedagogy is created *with* oppressed individuals and peoples, and it is aimed at humanization." Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, Teaching From the Heart: Theology and Educational Method (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 169f (emphasis in original).

direction of humanization. In this way an effective educator is one who desires to make a difference in the lives of her or his students.

Embracing the humanization of the local community requires that an educator first acknowledge that all education involves indoctrination into a dominant culture. The educator who seeks to liberate the student—and promote humanization—must choose between perpetuating the status quo or transforming the present social system. Once this choice is made, the next task of the educator is to listen to the student. Listening enables the educator to discern generative themes—the important issues, desires, and concerns of the community. Listening is a process that engages the educator with the community while uncovering the ways in which the community knows and reflects upon their world. Only after this task is completed, and the educator apprehends the generative themes of a community, is the educator able to engage in critical dialogue. While engaged in dialogue, the educator rejects the traditional role of teacher and takes on the role of a facilitator, raising questions and posing problems.

Problem-Posing Education

A fundamental component of a critical pedagogy is its use of a problem-posing methodology. For this reason critical education

> might best be described a cooperative problem posing. Learners are encouraged to identify the problems in their social context and, then, to seek liberating social actions. The central education act is action-reflection, and this done by the teacher and learners together.[3]

By posing problems that deal with the generative themes of the community, the educator

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[3] Moore, Teaching from the Heart, 171.

inspires learners to critically analyze and understand their situation as a part of the larger social system. In this way students understand their role in society and are empowered to claim ownership over the learning process.

From the perspective of the educator committed to critical pedagogy, each community must be understood as an historical subject whose historicity is acknowledged and whose wisdom is implemented as the starting point in the mediation of the community's naming of the world. Freire demonstrated this pedagogy by embracing a problem-posing methodology and facilitating critical reflection on action. Whenever members of a community are encouraged to actualize their current reality and then to name it, the action that results reflects a community concern. Community solutions are legitimated because they are derived from local interests. In the process, the role of the expert is diminished as the people learn to utilize their own locally constructed knowledge to decode local issues.

A genuine problem-posing education, one that is "prophetic" and acts with "revolutionary futurity," does not function from a strictly theoretical perspective, it is willing to risk taking action for the benefit of humanity. As facilitator of this cycle, the role of "the problem-posing educator is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the *logos*."[4] This ultimately creates critical thinkers within and among the community—persons who have set about the task of demythologizing the agenda of the oppressor and reconstructing their own social reality. Constructively, problem-posing education encourages socioeconomically and politically marginalized people to open their eyes to the social,

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[4] Freire, Pedagogy, 62.

political and cultural realities around them. Once aware, it further advocates that they

undertake a course of action to overcome the dehumanizing situations in which they find

themselves. This process inevitably results in the politicization of the people, "since

involvement in political policy-making is the necessary and inevitable result of taking the

world and humanity's place in it seriously."[5]

The Importance of Conscientization

> Freire, describes critical pedagogy using these words:

>> Our pedagogy cannot do without a vision of [humanity] and of this world. It formulates a scientific humanist conception that finds its expression in a dialogical praxis in which teachers and learners, together, in the act of analyzing a dehumanizing reality, denounce it while announcing its transformation in the name of liberation of [humankind].[6]

The dual acts of denouncing reality and simultaneously announcing its transformation are

essential to problem-posing pedagogy. It is this process that transforms a limit situation into

one of infinite possibilities where the community itself takes responsibility for and transforms

its lived daily reality. Remarkably, for true liberation to occur, the community itself must

initiate change; oppressors are not capable of liberating the oppressed, that task is left to the

oppressed who must liberate both themselves and their oppressors.[7] This radical break from

the norm compels a departure from traditional pedagogy and a focus on the conscientization

of the community. Accordingly, a critical pedagogy seeks not to integrate the learner into the

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[5] Deck, The Second Wave, 127.

[6] Freire, Cultural Action for Freedom, 20.

[7] "This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well." Attempts by the oppressors to liberate the oppressed will be experienced by the oppressed as "false generosity." Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 26.

structures of oppression,

> but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves." Such transformation, of course, would undermine the oppressors' purposes; hence their utilization of the banking concept of education to avoid the threat of student *conscientizaçao.*[8]

Conscientization is the raising of the consciousness of the learner. It is a necessary element of the process of education because it is the first step towards breaking the cycle of oppression and creating a people who become "beings for themselves." Only a conscientized people is moved to action. A "pedagogy of the oppressed," a pedagogy that leads to action, therefore, rejects the banking concept of education and shows concern for not only "absorbing knowledge but also, more importantly, with identifying social realities and responding through liberating action."[9] Significantly, action itself is never the ultimate goal. It too becomes subject to constant reexamination, reflection and revision; this process of action-reflection is never finished, but is an ongoing, continuous cycle whose goal it is not to be, but to become.

> Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity . . . . Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to *be*, it must *become.* Its "duration" is found in the interplay of the opposites *permanence* and *change.*[10]

The tension between the polar opposites, permanence and change, is essential to the educational process of forming humans. Grounded in tradition and open to limitless

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[8] Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 55.

[9] M. E. Moore, Teaching from the Heart, 170.

[10] Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 65 (emphasis in original).

possibilities, it is between the two poles that the liberating work of critical education becomes a reality. Moreover, it is a further example showing that Freire's basic approach to education is unquestionably dialectical as it "seeks to hold *in unity* theory and action, past and present realities, and thinking and doing in the social situation."[11]

An Indigenous Critique

Freire, who derived a methodology more compatible with a non-western oriented epistemology, rooted his popular pedagogy in European based philosophies of liberation, philosophies grounded in Hegelian dialectical theory and methods. The consequent dialectical pedagogy emanating from these philosophies struggles with the urgency of constructing a synthesis between two apparently contradictory poles to negate the negative.[12] Such a western-based, dialectical duality is not analogous to the *Nahuatl* speaking peoples understanding of duality as the fundamental, driving force of the cosmos. In the *Nahuatl* construct, duality was always a struggle between opposing, complementary forces. Thus, day and night, sun and moon, and man and woman are all necessary components of a complete world. For the *Nahuatl* speaking people, the struggle was concerned with maintaining a balance between these forces; it was never intended that the struggle would eradicate one end of the pole in favor of the other. To negate one pole in favor of the other would throw the cosmos into chaos. In the context of Western-based philosophies, there is a desire to resolve tension and construct multiple syntheses, even if at some point in the future a synthesis

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[11] Allen J. Moore, Ed.. Religious Education as Social Transformation (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1989), 20 (emphasis added).

[12] For an excellent description of dialectical pedagogy see Moacir Gadotti, Pedagogy of Praxis: A Dialectical Philosophy of Education (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1996).

becomes an antithesis. Thus, there exists a fundamental pressure on the educator to resolve

the inherent tension that exists between two seemingly incompatible positions. While this

pressure may not always emerge in the practical setting, it remains the goal of education. The

resolution of this dialectical tension is the unspoken agenda of all multicultural education

and, indeed, any program that calls for a synthesis or creation of a new *mestizaje*.[13] In fact,

James Banks and other adherents of multicultural education argue that multiculturalism does

not amplify differences, rather, it attempts to resolve differences—a posture that remains

fundamentally European and modernist.

Recently, critics of Freire's successors have pointed out the Eurocentric strain in

Freire's methodology. From the perspective of indigenous cultures, there is an inherent

difficulty with Friere's methodology. By requiring participants to step out of the process of

engaging the world and instead engage in reflection, facilitators advocate an artificial process.

In the indigenous world there can be no separation of the objective from the subjective self;

furthermore, it's impossible to abstract oneself out of the process to reflect on that process.[14]

By insisting on the process of reflection as a means of acquiring liberating knowledge,

Freire's methodology contradicts the indigenous way of understanding and acting in the

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[13] James Banks, who proposes content integration, a reevaluation of the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure, advocates a system of education that continues to adhere to the goals and ideals of the modernist mind set. James A. Banks, Multiethnic Education: Theory and Practice, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994); and James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, eds. Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1993).

[14] Lourdes Arguelles, "Working with Freire's Heirs," in Beyond Freire, ed. Frederique Apfeel-Marglin (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2002) forthcoming. See also Peter Mayo, Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action, (New York: Zed Books, 1999). Mayo identifies race and gender as two critical issues ignored in Freire's early work.

world. An indigenous perspective rejects the position that asks the student to look at their life and examine how they contribute to their own oppression. Rather, an educator operating out of an indigenous paradigm must ask, "how *as an educator* can I work with you?"[15] Another facet of the indigenous world missing from Freire's corpus of work is the respect due the natural world and the cosmos. Fundamentally, Freire's pedagogy places humanity at the center of the world. Freire has little if anything to say about the relationship between creation and freedom from oppression.

A more effective paradigm for students whose framework is derived from *Nahuatl* categories of thought and being, holds in tension and affirms multiple, complementary positions. A paradigm that allows for the existence of "many cultures" grants legitimacy to the primacy of the indigenous construct by allowing it to exist legitimately juxtaposed alongside the dominant paradigm.

<u>Toward a Many Culture Perspective</u>

Gregory Cajete, Virgilio Elizondo and Charles Foster, each of whom approaches education in different a manner and with different emphases, add insight to Freire's pedagogy and therefore will be helpful in the construction of an indigenous paradigm of education.[16]

<u>Gregory Cajete</u>

In Cajete's educational paradigm there are seven areas of emphasis. Each of the areas corresponds to a direction: North, West, South, East, Below, Above, and Center. Each area

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[15] Ibid.

[16] See Elizondo, "The Mexican American Religious Experience," in <u>Ethnicity in the Education of the Church</u> ed. Charles R Foster (Nashville: Scarritt Press, 1987); and Cajete, <u>Look to the Mountain</u>.

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of emphasis reflects a different "subject" or group of subjects. Notably, this ecology of education brings together education, environment and spirit in a holistic manner. The fundamental task of Cajete's system is to educate for the whole person living within a whole creation. Cajete claims that a person is educated through eight different stages, from early infancy to adulthood. Each of these stages adds another dimension to the previous. Each stage creates a person more and more an individual, and paradoxically, more and more a fundamental part of the community.

Charles Foster

Foster's concern that communities be conjunctive and be allowed to keep in tension the various poles is insightful. The acceptance of tension in community life is a common one outside of mainstream society. It reflects the way of life of the majority of so-called minority persons in the U.S.A—the ease with which these communities accept a dual identity and experience it as moving in and out of different worlds and cultures on daily basis. Foster makes his contribution from the perspective of leadership; in his system, for an intentional community to be successful, there must be in place a leader or leaders committed to diversity, the idea of "many-culture," and the notion that there will be a great deal of tension. The tension experienced within such a community is a reflection of the differences between the many cultures involved. Inclusion in leadership positions, a full voice, and access to the entire community must be made available to all persons. If any person is excluded, the entire endeavor is bound to fail. Although Foster addresses intentionally formed churches and congregations, his ideas can be extrapolated to include classroom settings with diverse populations.

Virgilio Elizondo

Elizondo affirms that the *mestizo/a* is forced to live in two worlds and is traditionally accepted fully in neither. As a result, there is the creation of a new identity—the Mexican American person who is a synthesis of the Mexican and the American—at once both and neither, insider and outsider. Significantly, the cultural heritage of this new creation finds roots in both México and America. Logically, this new creative impulse demands the creation of an education that allows for and accounts for multiple ways of knowing. A community whose construct of life and whose meaning-making systems emerged from competing symbol systems must be educated in a way that is compatible with a, now culturally embedded and preserved, dual perspective of life.

For example, Elizondo argues that the oral roots of *mestizo/a* society create a world view where the predominance of visible and invisible symbols reflect the importance of an unmistakable connection with creation. Language and lifestyles reflect the significant role of the symbolic in everyday life. Likewise, spoken words and phrases reflect the strong connection with the divine, creative impulse of the universe. Furthermore, in the Latino/a community, God is understood as a concrete, living participant in the day-to-day workings of life. In its rejoicing or in its suffering, the community understands that there exists a God who stands with the community. Education that ignores the existence of the spiritual dimension of life or focuses exclusively on the written or non-symbolic aspect of this world will never be adequate for the Latino/a learner.

Elizondo's emphasis on oral tradition and symbols is appropriate and can be added to any classroom setting or educational process. His emphasis on educating utilizing the faith

symbols and stories important to a culture, such as the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, can be incorporated into the entire curriculum. On the other hand, his idea of *mestizaje*—the merging of two or more cultures or identities to form a new culture—is one that, once again, attempts a cultural synthesis. Such an ideology is threatening to those who perceive cultural synthesis as cultural suicide. Over time each culture will take on the ideas, habits and traits of the other; however, to overtly advocate *mestizaje* prior to its natural occurrence is inappropriate and divisive. Instead, all cultures must be encouraged to utilize the stories, the symbols and the references that create meaning within their unique culture.

Toward an Ethic of Many-Culture

Alejandro García-Rivera utilizes Virgilio Elizondo's notion of *mestizaje* but approaches the subject from the perspective of cultural semiotics; in doing so he develops the notion of *mestizaje* in a way more appropriate for our discussion. By arguing that the relationship of one culture to another often provokes a violent and unequal clash of cultures, García-Rivera successfully articulates the negative aspects resulting from the creation of a new *mestizaje*.[17] Thus, he is able to demonstrate that this violent and unequal clash of cultures is responsible for the suppression of cultural identity and the construction of codes or symbols that conserve a separate identity in the face of that oppression.

García-Rivera begins his analysis of cultural differences with a story.[18] In his story the people of his congregation are searching for a way to include all people in the celebration

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[17] Alex García-Rivera. St. Martin de Porres.

[18] Alejandro García-Rivera, "A Matter of Presence," Journal of Hispanic-Latino Theology, 5 (Nov. 1997): 22-53

on December 12, of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. Each person or representative of a different culture lifts up their interpretation of Mary-*Guadalupe*. The Euro American, Anglo members of the congregation have no model and instead offer the Advent wreath. The so-called ethnic members of the congregation are taken aback by the non-existence of a Mary symbol. García-Rivera uses this experience to construct the idea that "representation," the utilization of a symbol in the place of self, is falsely used in multi-ethnic settings. Instead, he advocates the notion of presence—**the inter-subjective bestowal of self to the group**. In a multi-cultural environment, presence is a <u>sign</u> that expresses firstness or iconicity; in this way presence denotes the existence of a whole human subject in no need of being fixed or synthesized. The advent wreath, on the other hand, functions as a <u>symbol</u> of representation. As a symbol, representation is a second order function and expresses secondness—in and of itself it denotes that a real human subject is not present. In any setting where two or more cultures are present, to ask for or to expect a representation in the form of a symbol rather than a first order sign of presence, as multiculturalism does, is ultimately to ask each group to leave its identity at the door. True correspondence with other human beings is possible only in a setting of 'others-as-subjects.' In such a setting the inter-subjective bestowal of a self to the group in the presence of other fully human subjects in all their inter-subjective particularity is possible. Such an ideal is the goal of a many-cultured world.

García-Rivera, by adopting Gramsci's subaltern analysis of culture—which emerges from Gramsci's dialectical pedagogy, is able to explain the ways in which an oppressed people re-appropriates their old story and incorporates it into the new story in a subversive manner. Failing to re-appropriate a new story or to give an old story new meaning creates the

seeds of an oppressive environment that can lead to the suppression of identity and the creation of a condition where persons live their lives as 'others-as-object.' Conversely, what manifests itself in the retelling of stories or the creation of myths is an empowerment of the conquered people and a recreation of a new historical identity. This process allows the preservation of self as 'other-as-subject' and simultaneously reaffirms the integrity of ones primary culture in the midst of the unequal and violent clash of cultures.

Appropriating an emerging identity and demanding legitimacy in its own right is not *mestizaje* in Elizondo's sense; rather, it reflects a dual system based upon the simultaneous narration of the conqueror's story juxtaposed with the old story. Elizondo was correct in advocating the idea that many-culture is a more effective means of relating to others. García-Rivera takes his idea even further with his claim that "many culture" is preferred over against multi-culture. Even though the stories will continually change—in time they may become fixed but rarely become univocal—the change reflects the dynamism and fluidity of the border or boundary that surrounds each culture and relates them one to another. The resultant picture is constructed in the same way a mosaic is made—each piece contributes to the whole and is able to stand on its own with a legitimate separate identity.

Elizondo was correct in his belief that *mestizaje* is not the destruction of identity; he pushed too hard the notion of a universal synthesis, though, that I think is better stated by García-Rivera. By overlooking the effect representation or "lack of presence" has on cultures bred in the reality of a violent and unequal clash of cultures, Elizondo fell short. Whereas a philosophy advocating *mestizaje* has been simplified into one that seeks to find a synthesis leading to a modern universal, the historical reality denoted by the term "many-culture"

upholds the inherent tension in society and affirms the dialectic that exists between two competing cultures.

García-Rivera adds a helpful corrective by advocating a many-cultured society. His work, however, can be furthered by incorporating the concepts of *poiesis* and imagination. In a many-culture environment where each person and group is uplifted and no group or person can lay claim to the center—the dominant position—there will be inherent tension and a jostling for position (hence, boundaries and identity). Only the grace of the spirit working in the imagination of the community will prevent the many from becoming the none. Incorporating the perspectives of *poiesis* and imagination will decrease the tensions between the material and the spiritual, the temporal and the religious, the personal and the social, and others of the same kind. With the spirit of *poiesis* as mediator, the perspective of 'others-as-subject' will be understood, not suppressed, and orthopathically harmonized through the creative action and working of the spirit of life. In the world of the Chicano/a this tension can only be understood as a harmony in anticipation, "a state of extreme dynamic tension, such as when two forces meet without resolution and veer precariously toward the edge of chaos."[19] Balance—equilibrium in motion—is the ultimate goal. In this context the liberation of one's own world is to act as a source of life (or energy), life in its holistic traditioning totality, to those with whom we are in daily contact. Recovering a way to incorporate *poiesis* into the process of formulating a many-culture community is the task discussed in the next chapter.

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[19] Sylvia Marcos, personal communication, Claremont, California. See Chapter 4.

Conclusion

The self-consciously, many cultured community requires a creative educational program. Central to its construction is the notion that it is "many cultured" as opposed to "multi-cultural." From the beginning there must exist the belief that each culture has a natural presence and is not expected to "blend in" or to become part of the pot. This emphasis allows the establishment of diverse ways of teaching and learning. In such a construct, there is room for Cajete's ecology of indigenous education because all education is appreciated as indigenous. This so-called self-consciously, many cultured community requires a creative educational program. Constructing that program is the task of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8

An Indigenous Pedagogy

Robert Bellah, assessing the dominant ethos of the United States, suggests that the prevailing cultural spirit of the nation affirms values promoting ontological individualism.[1] Pedagogy emerging from within this individualistic social framework, by necessity, also promotes values associated with an individualistic ethic. Implications for an educator in this system are far-reaching. Educators, in strictly theoretical terms, are the dispensers of facts and knowledge; on a practical level, however, education is never neutral. All education influences the formation of individual identity and the indoctrination of individual morals and standards. In essence, the role the educator plays is that of guardian of the national ideology. In this capacity, the educator in the United States explicitly focuses "more on the individual echoing or mirroring certain values rooted in humanism and the Enlightenment mindset."[2] Still, educators can choose to engage their students or to remain distant from the everyday earthly concerns of their students. Furthermore, the educator can choose to uphold the national individualistic ideology or choose to build a community. Unfortunately, by virtue of the nature of the system, most remain distant from learners and become promoters of an

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[1] Bellah, et al, <u>Habits of the Heart</u>. North American individualism is, according to Bellah: "a belief that the individual has a primary reality whereas society is a second-order, derived or artificial construct, a view we can call *ontological individualism* . . . . It is opposed to the view that society is as real as individuals, a view we call *social realism*." Ibid., 334 (emphasis in original). Emphasis on "ontological individualism" results in the minimizing of community, including family, in North American culture. North Americans, according to Bellah, are less interested in community and family, and in their place substitute the ideal of a "lifestyle enclave." The net result is a resistance to living in solidarity. "Indeed, the absence of the word solidarity in the socio-political and economic discourse of the U.S. is very telling." Deck, <u>Second Wave</u>, 100.

[2] Deck, <u>Second Wave</u>, 114.

individualistic ethic. Ultimately, education neglects the formation in learners of a collective conscience and rarely, if ever, offers a critique of social systems or structures. The young Chicano/a, whose mind is formed in a more diverse, collective, and residually oral cosmos, is not nurtured by this approach.

That being the case, educational practices in the United States must be examined, reviewed and revised if they are to be effective in empowering Chicano/a or immigrant populations. Too often, educational practices reflect, at best, the view of traditional pedagogy, namely, pedagogy that upholds formation of individual identity and conscience as a priority. This creates a situation whereby ways of living, learning and being are separated from the lives of the people who most seek and need inclusion—immigrants and their children. One result of this pedagogical approach is "the destruction of the inner sense of solidarity characteristic of popular Hispanic cultures."[3] Another result of the universalizing approach is that it furthers the assimilation of the Chicano/a or Latino/a American national to the North American urban middle-class culture, a process that, if we take Bellah as our reference point, often moves people away from the truth instead of toward it. In this chapter, I suggest an alternative method of educating Chicanos/as, recent immigrants and the children of immigrants.

The Power of Poiesis

> There's a way to live life, *la vida*, with power and magic, a way of triumphing over all odds and living life like a superhuman being, just like Superwoman and Superman. And this isn't "bull," but the "truth" of all living, if only we open our eyes to see life, *la vida*, in all its true wonder and greatness.

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[3] Ibid., 117.

Stories . . . give wings of understanding and feet of power rooted in Mother Earth, so that [we] can live [our] lives not alone, but with the breath of [our] ancestry breathing down [our] necks . . . . Stories give . . . strength and a sense of well-being, even in their darkest hours of living in this scary "modern" world, where people are afraid of getting old, afraid of being left alone, or simply afraid to reach out and touch their fellow human beings . . . . Life is full of magic, real magic, and not the magic of tricks and games and pulling rabbits out of black hats, but the real magic that gives us power and strength to endure and triumph in everyday life, *la vida.*

If you have the eyes to see and the ears to hear, you will know that to live life without the magic of your God-given soul is to live life like a fish out of water, like an eagle without sky, an antelope without an open meadow or a heart without love. You see, the soul is to magic just like the eagle is to the sky and the fish is to water and the antelope is to the big, open meadow—our soul is fearless and full of joy and makes living a great, glorious, magical adventure open to all![4]

This chapter will explore the power of living a life open to endless possibilities—a life frequently discounted by the modernistic, technological society of the twenty-first century. It is the life of the dreamers, the visionaries who point the way into a tomorrow grounded in the past and filled with the hope of the present; a life open to the knowledge acquired from *poiesis* and imagination.

Thomas Groome, reconstructing *poiesis* beyond Aristotle's understanding of it as an "intelligent way of life and knowing that is productive and creative," suggests that *poiesis* is human action that includes "all the creative, imaginative, and life-giving work of all humankind."[5] I intend to develop Groome's grasp of *poiesis* in the direction of emancipatory *poiesis* and then to integrate the understanding of emancipatory *poiesis* with an indigenous

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[4] Villaseñor, Walking Stars, 7f.

[5] Thomas H. Groome, Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, The Way of Shared Praxis (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1991), 44f. This differs from Clodovis Boff's understanding of *poiesis* as merely a "transitive activity, whose finality is something other than itself," Clodovis Boff, Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1987), 331.

understanding of the dynamic and living relationship that exists between the human spirit and the universe—a vivifying element understood as *ollin*, resonance or vibration.[6] It is the real-life imaginative power of emancipatory *poiesis*, when grasped in the context of the teaching-learning situation, that will free *mestizo/a* immigrants and their children from the rigid and fixed thinking found in the school systems they encounter in the United States.

A Model of Effective Education

I begin my model with a story—a story passed on to me by my family. It is a story steeped in strength and filled with the powerful vision of a man who lived for his community and family.

> It was 1903, the turn of the century, and a number of natural disasters made life on the Arizona-New Mexico border difficult for a man with a large family to raise. Francisco and his wife Dolores had six young children to feed and rich, fertile land to tend to. The long and seemingly endless drought forced many neighbors and good friends to move further West or higher up the mountains to who knows where. Water was scarce and good friends were becoming scarcer. To make matters worse a brutal disease plagued the small community and killed off many of the elderly and young children. Unfortunately, the two newborn Martinez children were afflicted and died during the outbreak; this was the fourth of their children to die before celebrating their first birthday. Yet, as painful as this was, Francisco knew his wife was strong and God would soon give them many more children.
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> Francisco Martinez was a middle aged man—he never knew his real age and didn't really care, thanks be to God he was alive and that's all that mattered (his family believes he was over 100 years old when he died in 1940.) As a young man Francisco Pabon left his community, took his mothers surname (Martinez) and crossed the *Rio Bravo del Norte* to begin a new life in El Norte. He found a

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[6] Rael, Being and Vibration.

good job, albeit a very dangerous one due to the invasion by the U.S. of Indian land, carrying supplies between El Paso and Albuquerque via wagon. On many occasions he encountered the indigenous natives of the Southwest—men whom he respected and who in turn respected him. It was on one of those trips, in 1885, while passing through the county seat in Mesilla, that he met his wife-to-be. After settling down a few years in Las Cruces, Francisco lost his job and he and his family headed West toward Silver City and the mountainous region of the Gila wilderness. As the mines ran low and the population edged westward, the Martinez family followed—to Lordsburg, Duncan, San Antonio, Clifton, Metcalf, Morenci, and eventually Los Angeles.

Francisco, known as a *Tiga* Indian to his neighbors, was a man respected for the wisdom and knowledge he possessed—learned, he claims, as a young boy listening to the elders of his community. He valued these lessons immensely and saw to it that he passed on his knowledge and wisdom to his children. Still, and he knew this to be true too, they learned more from his actions than from his words. It was during the year 1898, that Francisco showed his family and small town the true value of his wisdom. Because the drought had been long, many of the rickety houses in the community were built too close to the banks of a perpetually dry river; some were built in the river bed itself. One early morning of a particularly warm summer day, off in the high mountains to the north, Francisco sensed something peculiar. He had learned to resonate with and "read" the earth's messages as a child—of course this was an important skill to know, the gods lived in the mountains and by reading them one would know what the gods had in store for the community. He listened, concentrating long and hard before discerning the wonderful, horrible truth—rain, angry and powerful, was on its way . . . fast. He summoned his neighbors and reported the news. The residents of the small town, whose hopes had been dashed many times before, told Francisco to go back to work. They felt comfortable that rain was far in the future—besides it wasn't yet the rainy season. But Francisco, a stubborn man, was as certain about this as he ever was about anything. Moving quickly he rounded up his young children. They collected as much strong, thick rope as possible, tied one end to the largest trees they could find and the other end they tied around their house, fastening it securely. After anchoring their house with three sturdy ropes, the rain began—strong monsoons, the kind that soak a person to the skin in a matter of

seconds—and wind that forced them to hold on to each other tight for support. Their feet were quickly mired in mud; but they set out to secure as many nearby houses as possible. They were able to secure only one other house before they were forced inside. By the end of the day only two houses remained standing. It was in these two houses that the entire community sought shelter until the town was rebuilt.

This story is offered as a model of education for leadership and liberation. The knowledge and intuitive wisdom mastered by my great-grandfather is not found in books or learned at school. His mind was shaped and his wisdom nurtured at the feet of the elders of his community—the wise men and women who were in touch with and whose lives resonated with the voices of the spirits of god. Yet, if education can be defined as the process of "sharing content with people in the context of their community and society,"[7] his was a genuine education, an education similar in many ways to Mary Elizabeth Moore's "traditioning" education. "Traditioning" education is a transformational education grounded in a remembering of the historical traditions of the past with the hope of transformation of the future.[8] Indispensable to this model is the priority of *poiesis*—acting on the knowledge one receives. Failure to act renders one's knowledge useless. Finally, action is undertaken for the benefit of a self in the context of a community. In this sense it is emancipatory and can be construed as an emancipatory *poiesis*. These factors—a *traditioning wisdom* poietically

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[7] Pazmiño, Latin American Journey, 28.

[8] Mary Elizabeth Moore, Education for Continuity and Change, 121. Moore claims that traditioning education "is understood as a process by which the historical tradition is remembered and transformed as the Christian community encounters God and the world in present experience and as that community is motivated toward the future." An important element of this model is the concept of accumulating wisdom: "the ongoing tradition, past present and future; the accumulating experience; and a wisdom that grows out of the community's experience in the world." Ibid., 176.

put into *action* for the *emancipation and benefit of the community*—are the foundation of a model of education for those operating out of a Chicano/a framework.

An *a priori* necessity for this model of education is the existence of a community of ontic beings committed to nurturing relationships within their community and the cosmos. These people reveal their commitment to one another through a series of actions taken on behalf of the world. In a society that acknowledges the reality that humanity at its ontological core is a connected community of *ontic* selves, what emerges is true *ontic conation*, that is a community of real beings acting purposively for one another in history.[9] Furthermore, a relationship in balance with the earth/soil/cosmos, presupposes that as humans we have the ability to perceive the communication and movements of the Earth and resonate with them. Such attunement to the earth's vibrations involves the entire body-self: the senses, the emotions, and the sensual and conceptual capacities. To embrace this concept is to understand the cosmos as not simply a mass of inanimate matter, but to acknowledge the ever present spirit of life, *ollin,* resonating with and through all matter, interconnecting humanity with non-humanity; past with present and future; and all persons with the continuing presence of their ancestors.

The Multiple Tasks of Education

Various scholars have envisioned the principle tasks of a community of believers in terms of a web or network. This web is drawn by Robert Pazmiño as a circle or mandala with four points or tasks on the circle's perimeter and with the fifth task as the heart or

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[9] Groome defines conation as "the conscious drive to perform volitional acts. This implies consciousness, desire, will and action." Groome, Sharing Faith, 27.

center. He describes on the circle the four tasks of education in the church as (1) call and commitment (*kerygma*), (2) community and covenant (*koinonia*), (3) care and concern (*diakonia*), and (4) conscience and challenge (*propheteia*). These tasks as a unified whole form the mission of the community of faithful. At the center is the fifth task, celebration and creativity (*leitourgia*). The hub of the circle in this model is the decisive task of the community, that which marks its distinctive past, present and eternity. These are the tasks of "worship, celebration, and the expression of creativity that gives glory to God." The educational task in relation to *leitourgia*, "is fostering a sense of worship to encompass all of life and exploring avenues for integration that are afforded people through creative expression."[10] These tasks are placed at the center to designate their priority and the potentially integrative function that the expression of creativity and imagination can have in the church.

I find Pazmiño's metaphorical use of the mandala to be similar to an indigenous Native American understanding of a medicine wheel. "Imagine the medicine wheel as a big circle, and in the middle of the circle is a stone which represents the heart."[11] Numerous indigenous people in North America conceive of the medicine wheel as a metaphor for life. It teaches that life is circular, not linear; life is whole not separate. As described by Joseph Rael, the inner periphery of the circle is made up of the incongruity that at this moment in time is here and everywhere. The way the medicine wheel works is that in each given

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[10] Pazmiño, Latin American Journey, 62-73.

[11] Rael, 82. The cross at the center represents the colors of humanity—red, white, black, and yellow. The directions—north, west, south, and east—are a reminder that life is to be lived in harmony and balance. Each indigenous group utilizes a different color scheme.

moment there is a movement to the periphery from the center of the heart. "It [the heart] wants to know something it doesn't know yet." As depicted by the *Nahuatl* speaking *tlamatinime* of long ago, there is an unsettled longing within the heart, a search for the truth. The 'flash' is first to the East—to travel here is to travel in the direction of the mental. In this direction there is unity or wholeness in all things; it is here that one discovers the big picture, an overview of everything. Next is the South, the direction of emotional awareness. This is the direction that deals with relationships and polarities or opposites, like hot/cold or sun/moon; it is here that people underst*and* their relationship with Spirit. The South is for the purpose of carrying one another in a loving way. Third is the West, the physical. It is the place of transformation and reconciliation of the opposites and paradoxes; here is where all humanity comes into harmony with all creation. The North, the direction of the spiritual, is where each person finds direction and purpose. Here there is clarity about ones path and step. In traveling around the medicine wheel we travel through the East-mental, the South-emotional, the West-physical, and the North-spiritual. This journey has taken us from a general overview of all things to a position of clarity about ones purpose, albeit without the resources necessary for change. This comes only by returning to the heart, the center, a place of resonance and transformational possibilities. Here the potential for growth from one's new insight comes in the act of asking for help from the primary potential of the Spirit.[12]

Both the medicine wheel and Pazmiño's web are metaphors for life. Each metaphor is integral to a holistic vision of life and of education. In both cases there is an emphasis on spirit, understood as resonance and transformational creativity. This spirit (*ollin,* movement,

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[12] Rael, 82-91.

resonance) and its creative activity (*poiesis* and imagination) emanate from the center and penetrate all other aspects of the model. Nevertheless, in Pazmiño's model, the creative aspect is found only at the hub, the center around which all else rotates. Although still foundational, it restricts the creative movement to one portion of community life. By reformulating his model the spiritual aspect is at once the center of creative activity which also completely permeates all other aspects of the circle. This is indicative of an emancipatory *poiesis* of creativity saturating all aspects of life and education. For purposes of this project, an indigenous education is portrayed as a circle with multiple aspects on the periphery—purpose, content, resources and components—and a center of transformational possibilities which permeates the entire circle.

Education: Purpose

        Working within this framework reveals that the purpose of education is three-fold. **First, it must educate persons to act in manners consistent with and expressive of their contextual community message—their community story.** To this end the curriculum must purposefully train students to re-create community messages utilizing stories and expressions specific to and accepted by their local community. These stories must accurately reflect the everyday *realidad* of the community in all their positive and negative authenticity. **Second, it must educate persons to fulfil their vocation as a people living in relationship with one another**. To achieve this task students must be equipped to perform transforming outreach to their respective communities through their daily activities. These activities must reflect the emancipatory nature necessary to transform the community. **Third, it must educate persons to act in manners consistent with an earth ethic supportive of the**

cosmos. To achieve this purpose students must be taught the wisdom of their ancestors. This wisdom will reflect an understanding of the cosmos as a living, breathing organism whereby spirit and earth enter into a parallel relationship with the community.

Fundamentally, an indigenous curriculum must have as its purpose and aim the production of "women and men who have the conviction, courage, and capacity to change and transform structures and the world" in a way consistent with and affirming of the hopes and dreams of their shared past.[13] This purpose is evident in the story of Francisco as he accessed the wisdom of his ancestors to *poietically* act in accordance with the earth imperative specific for his community. Moreover, these purposes parallel the purposes of the *calmécac*, where *Mexica* youth were indoctrinated into the community story via shared actions on behalf of the people of the community.

With these purposes in the forefront, **an indigenous education involves first and foremost the process of sharing or gaining the particulars of community wisdom through the sharing of the community story**. Knowing the world from an indigenous perspective, yields a pedagogy nourished by the recognition that the cosmos is infused with religious signification. On a practical level, an indigenous world-view shapes a reality whereby all education is infused with religious meaning and can only be construed as religious education. In this paradigm, religious education involves the formation of community values, attitudes, and life-styles, as well as fostering the conversion of people, communities, societies, and structures—or transmitting information that leads to their

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[13] Pazmiño, Latin American Journey, 39.

formation and transformation.[14] An indigenous framework stresses the conversion of the earth and its environment as well.

Education: Content

As illustrated by Moore's traditioning education, content is the accumulating wisdom of the community. Accumulating wisdom is the wisdom passed on from the elders in the community—sought after in today's world—keeping in mind a vision for the future. It also includes the wisdom derived from a relationship with the earth and the cosmos. Ability to "read" and understand the cosmos emerges from the natural capacity of humans to resonate with the movements of the multiple manifestations of the spirits of the earth. This intuitive capacity for understanding the unique message of the cosmos, misplaced by persons grounded in the reality of modern first world cultures, allows humans to live in balance with all of creation. The natural wisdom of the earth can also be thought of as the creative force of the cosmos, the vivifying element that maintains and sustains the ability of the earth to heal itself in the face of destructive inhabitants.

In many first world communities traditional wisdom is conceived as correct teaching and thinking, or orthodoxy. Freire reminds us that theoretical knowledge is insufficient without a corresponding moment of reflection; therefore the emphasis on praxis. *Nahuatl* philosophy and modern indigenous peoples add to the two a third conversation partner, "to smooth out the irreconcilable conflict occurring in relation to the priorities of faith that may not recognize the need for *both* orthodoxy *and* orthopraxis."[15] Many authorities have named

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[14] Pazmiño, Latin American Journey, 61.

[15] Ibid., 24.

this third aspect of the conversation, orthopathy. Orthopathy is defined as the "right response of feeling, passion, and commitment to address the realities of suffering and to destroy the destroyers of life."[16] I suggest that the mediating nature of orthopathy, born of the spirit and nurtured in *poiesis*, is a key element in a holistic understanding of the connection between humanity and the cosmos, and is consequently a meaningful contributor to indigenous pedagogy. As a mediating response, one that reconciles all relationships, orthopathy calls forth the best of rational thought and belief and the best of praxis and action. Similar to the role of the Spirit-*ollin* that permeates the *perichoresis*-communion model of the godhead, the orthopathic resonance inherent in the cosmos constitutes every social relation. Accordingly, through the work of the Spirit-*ollin*—forming, liberating, and proclaiming the community as the ontic presence of the Creator—God, persons, community and the entire cosmos, indeed everything that makes up society, "intrinsically cohere in the concrete social relation."[17]

Orthopathy also affirms that humanity, created as *imago Dei*, is created creative and is empowered by the Creator to use that diverse creative ability and energy for the glory of creation. This affirmation is the justification for believing in the transformational

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[16] See Samuel Solivan, "Orthopathos: Interlocutor between Orthodoxy and Praxis," Andover Newton Review 1 (Winter 1990): 19-25, cited in Pazmiño, Latin American Journey, 122. Richard J. Mouw, arguing for the necessity of integrating orthodoxy, orthopraxy, and orthopathy, defines orthopathy as "correct feelings" and "a seeking of the personal presence of the Holy Spirit." "Life in the Spirit in an Unjust World," PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, (Fall 1987): 127. His is an arbitrary definition that ignores the real tension between orthopraxy and orthodoxy. Clodovis Boff attempts to forge a midpoint between orthopraxy and orthodoxy by pointing out the dialectic between them. He argues that the responsibility of theology is to establish internal consistency for theological statements, epistemological validation, and correlation between theology and faith experience, pistic verification. See Theology and Praxis, 199f. However, this tends to separate faith as a subjective experience of truth from truth as an object of theological reflection. By adding resonance-*ollin*, our definition seeks the integral cohesiveness that keeps faith, action, truth and theology together.

[17] Anderson, Historical Transcendence, 77.

possibilities and creative hope endowed upon humanity by the Creator. Such creative wisdom is certainly appreciated in the above story of Francisco as he utilizes his creative passions and energies for the benefit of the community. It is also apparent that this creative wisdom was a key element in *Mexica* pedagogy.

Education: Components and Resources

The necessary components of an indigenous model of education are described by Moore as an essential part of her traditioning model. These are: "Internal wisdom, embodied in the community itself; expansive wisdom, embodied in selected subject manner; creativity, embodied in curriculum design; and communication, embodied in curriculum resources."[18] In the context of my story, the internal wisdom is the wisdom passed on by Francisco, in the role of teacher, to his children, acting as students, in their effort to save their homes. The subject matter is the lesson taught by the earth itself—appreciated only by one with the ability to understand the expansive wisdom of the earth. Although not designed by humans, in a sense the curriculum or environmental design is the earth itself—possessing a wisdom open to and available to all persons but heard and understood by only a few. As recipients of this wisdom, humanity is not so much a co-Creator as a co-participant in the mysteries of life.

Communication of tradition is achieved through curricular resources. These resources include whatever material we might have at our disposal to "facilitate the transmission and interpretation of the . . . tradition."[19] In this instance the story itself—and the process of

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[18] Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, Rhythmic Curriculum: Guiding an Educative Journey, (Unpublished manuscript, Claremont, Calif, 1994), 22.

[19] Ibid., 30.

storytelling—is the primary curricular resource. In a residually oral society the process of storytelling is one key to effective learning. It is also one that certainly accommodates an indigenous perspective.

The Mandate for An Indigenous Pedagogy

The action my great-grandfather took to save his community was not meant to be anything other than what it was—action taken by a man who placed his family and community ahead of his own safety. Here, it serves as a model of education for effective action and leadership in a specific locus. That locus is the community that embodies similar values and historical-cultural assumptions. Throughout this project I have demonstrated that Chicanos/as and *mestizos/as*, those persons whose epistemological framework has its roots in the indigenous communities populated by the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica, claim many of the same values, assumptions and cognitive processes as their ancestors. Among the two most important values are, first, the belief in the priority of community and family over against the modern ideal of the atomistic individual, and second, the presence of a particular wisdom that encourages resonance with the voices of the spirit of the Creator—wherever those voices may be felt or heard. Because it is a community whose traditions are oral rather than written, much of the religiosity and wisdom of the community has been handed down from generation to generation in the form of devotional piety, stories and *dichos*—sayings. The sense of *rechazo* experienced by Chicanos/as, *mestizos/as*, and Latinos/as has prevented these realities from being made public. My task, and the task of all educators operating from within a *mestizo/a* framework, is to utilize these rich sources of natural cultural curriculum, with their inherent lessons of resonance, imagination and

courage, to construct *poietically* an emancipatory model of education grounded in and with the community.

Indigenous pedagogy must then foster the second task of education in this framework: in Freire's words, the conscientization of the community. Conscientization is sought after not as a means of owning or possessing the world or knowledge, but that it might lead the community to corporately engage in creatively transforming its world. Thus, indigenous pedagogy promotes a praxis of education steeped in *poietic* activity and understood as a struggle for creative social change. Furthermore, by granting people ownership over a curriculum derived from within their own culture, the community is likely to become empowered to act as subjects of their own history. This change in perspective will transform people from others-as-objectified objects into historical subjects. At this point the community will become master of its own destiny, a powerful subject with the desire to act rather than continue to react as passive object.

The Practical Application of a Holistic Model of Education: The Curriculum in Practice

> Organize classroom relationships so that students can draw on and confirm those dimensions of their histories and experiences that are deeply rooted in the surrounding community . . . . assume pedagogical responsibility for attempting to understand the relationships and forces that influence students outside the immediate context of the classroom . . . . develop curricula and pedagogical practices around those community traditions, histories, and forms of knowledge that are often ignored with the dominant school culture . . . . create the conditions where students come together to speak, to engage in dialogue, to share their stories, and to struggle together within social relations that strengthen rather than weaken possibilities for active citizenship.[20]

An effective model of education for the recent immigrant from México in the western

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[20] Henry A. Giroux, Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning (Granby, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1988), 199-201.

United States is one that integrates the main ideas of a liberating paradigm of education as advocated by Freire with the categories of thought and philosophy as they have been derived from the epistemological framework and understanding of the cosmos as interpreted by the ancient Mesoamericans. The first step in creating a community-based curriculum requires an active interaction with the people in their daily lives. This allow the educator access to important generative words and themes. The stories collected throughout this project and the words and themes collected and listed in Chapter 1 become important at this point in the discussion. Utilizing the words, themes and stories important to the community it becomes possible to devise a curriculum specific to the needs of the community. A problem-posing methodology, based upon the codes identified in a survey of the community, are a key component of indigenous pedagogy.

With that in mind, using as a case study a community college located in a service area where the surrounding population is 64% Latino/a, I will describe a process of education constructed and implemented specifically for and with recent immigrants from Latin America.

The community college recently received a grant to implement a training program with the intention of introducing immigrants to the process of becoming citizens. Civics Education: Building Effective Communities (CEBEC) is a citizenship education and service learning project targeting the adult immigrant population in the Southern California region. The goal of the CEBEC program is to provide pertinent instruction and active learning opportunities for the community. The aim is to develop and integrate core curriculum that will meet the needs of the growing immigrant population, particularly in relationship to

values, basic skills, citizenship and language acquisition. It is expected that the curriculum will provide the training and skills development to ease transition of the target population into the larger society. It is desired that persons who complete the program will become involved as active and productive members of their communities. CEBEC is modeled around the concept of a holistic learning community, whereby services, education, training, and life skills development are interconnected with one another.

Grounded in the principles of a liberating pedagogy, workshops were created to address and put into practice the critical competencies students need in order to succeed in the classroom. It is anticipated that students will attain knowledge through classroom and modular workshops as well as community based service learning activities.

The primary objectives of the program are,

- To develop a core values-based curriculum that will integrate ESL, citizenship/civics, basic skills, community service learning and technology education.
- To utilize a learning community approach in the classroom and modular components.
- To conduct outreach efforts to the community.
- To offer workshops in the local community.

On the following pages I will describe four CEBEC workshops created with and for the local population. Only the last two workshops will be described in their entirety. All workshops end with a question and answer session and an evaluation session. Each workshop has already been implemented in the communities described in Chapter 1.

The Workshops

Role of Team Facilitators: The role of the team facilitators is crucial in creating a supportive and inviting environment for all participants during the session. The facilitators will facilitate the workshops in the following manner:

- Guide the process
- Be neutral members of the workshop
- Respect the ideas of all participants
- Focused on objectives that have been identified for the workshop
- Make sure that participants complete a workshop evaluation form
- Facilitators of these workshops **ARE NOT** lecturers. Do not take on this role.
- Model collaboration for participants.

Methods of Instruction:
- Collaborative activities: analysis of cases, sharing experiences.
- Problem-posing.
- Participants' presentations.
- Critical analysis of films, news, current events.

Workshop #1: <u>Becoming a Productive Citizen</u>

Workshop Description: Understanding the political foundations of the community and the country is fundamental for the successful civic and political participation of the members of a community. An active community member is a person who understands that the laws and the political organization of a community are in place to promote and sustain a political environment where citizens' rights and responsibilities are protected and nurtured. The individual awareness that an active participation in civic life, through which social, political and cultural needs are successfully met, is a mark of civic maturity. Understanding the laws that govern the community and learning to participation in the political system effectively will help members of the community in resolving problems and advancing new projects which could benefit the life of the community at large. The members of the community will understand that the political life is not an abstract notion performed by distant individuals but is the active participation in the community of individuals with similar interests and needs. This interactive, team-taught workshop will introduce participants to several strategies to create a positive sense of community responsibility. The workshop is tailored to meet the diverse needs of the community, locally and globally.

Workshop Objectives:

- To learn about the location and services of city offices and municipal courts.
- To question participants on their understanding of the Bill of Rights and the Pre-amble of the Constitution with participants.
- To examine the branches of government and the similarities and differences in the structures of the local, state and federal government,

- To understand the benefits of enrolling in a citizenship class.
- To understand basic citizen, naturalization, and residency process.
- To recall important historical, political, national and local dates.
- To learn about citizens' rights.

Workshop #2: Citizenship, Family, and Community Responsibility

Workshop Description: Understanding the importance of the role of a parent is essential in building strong and productive relationships within the family unit. It is vital that parents understand they are the first teachers of their children, and their involvement has lasting impact. Parental roles range from such things as financial responsibility and value leadership to the promotion of education and community involvement for all family members. When parents and family members are actively involved in each other's lives, this creates an environment in which parents and children feel secure and nurtured. The family unit provides the foundation where members learn to grow as independent, confident, and responsible members of society. As responsible members of society, these individuals are then able to take on their role as productive citizens and active members of their communities. The members of the community will recognize that their participation, through such things as community service, is necessary to address the needs and concerns of all citizens. This interactive, team taught workshop will introduce participants to several strategies they can use to create a positive understanding of family and community responsibility.

Objectives: Through activities, participants will:

- Learn the importance of providing financial support to their family unit.
- Learn the importance of providing value leadership to their family unit.
- Learn the importance of encouraging education for all family members.
- Learn the importance of good parenting skills.
- Learn the importance of participating as conscious community participants.
- Learn that they are capable of making a difference in their community.

Workshop #3: Self-Esteem (For English Speaking Groups)

Workshop Description: In the United States it is believed that positive self-esteem is essential to creating a rich, full life. The ability to build effective communities for families, friends, peers and self is directly affected by one's self-concept. This interactive, team-taught workshop will introduce participants to several strategies they can use to create a positive environment for their families and strengthen a sense of self-worth in their children.

Objectives: Through activities, participants will:

- Understand the differences between their lives and the lives of their children.
- Understand the definition of self-esteem as used in the United States.
- Learn about the basic human needs that must be fulfilled in order for a person to build confidence.
- Understand how cultural differences can affect our understanding of self-esteem.
- Identify eight strategies they can use to improve the self-esteem of their children
- Collaborate with session participants to practice positive affirmations of their children

Training Time: Depending on the needs of the participants, the time allotted to each activity may have to be adjusted so that each objective is adequately covered. If participant intake forms are available for team facilitators to review, prior to the workshop, this will help them plan more effective activities within the given time frame. Be sure to leave adequate time for questions and answers.

Workshop Agenda

I. Welcome/Icebreaker Activity

II. <u>Activity: Objective #1</u>: Differences between our lives and the lives of our children. Introduction of the codes:

<u>Story #1</u>
Natividad came to the United States at the age of 17 and, because he had difficulty learning English, was placed in a middle school with 12 and 13 year old children. Even though he had almost completed high school in México, he thought this was a terrific idea! Soon he was the most popular, and the biggest, boy at the school. Within a few months his English improved to the point that he was transferred into the high school and completed his studies.

<u>Story #2</u>
Alejandro smiled proudly as he walked into class for his first day of school in his new neighborhood. He was five-years-old and was raised by his mother and grandmother who spoke to him only in Spanish. As he sat down he realized that the sounds coming out of the mouths of the other children were strangely unfamiliar to him. The teacher, too, spoke in words he could not understand. Soon he felt thoroughly alone. No matter how hard he tried he could not make sense of what was spoken to him. He hated that school and never wanted to go back.

<u>Story #3</u>

Stella knew that today was going to be a terrible day. It was costume day at school and all of her friends were going to be dressed up. But when her dad saw their outfits, he told her that "she was never going out of the house dressed like that." She was so humiliated that she decided that the best thing to do would be to stay away from home and to stay away from school.

- Explain to the participants that these are real life scenarios.
- Have the participants read and discuss the stories in groups of three.
- After 5 minutes of discussion, have each group discuss stories similar to these that they have experienced.
- Tell them to write down important thoughts and feelings they have about these stories or other stories like them.

III. <u>Activity Objective #2</u>: Definition of Self-esteem
- Using the codes from activity one, have the participants discuss their thoughts about self-esteem in the United States.
- With this information, have them arrive at a definition of self-esteem that will be applicable for the entire session.

IV. <u>Activity objective #3</u>: Basic Needs (This activity requires input from the facilitator.)
- Provide basic information on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs utilizing the "Ladder of Human Needs."[21]
- In groups of 3 or 4, ask the participants to identify their basic needs as persons living in the community.
- After these are written down, ask them to identify the basic needs of the young people in their family or community.
- Ask them if the two lists coincide? If not, why not?
- This activity also serves as an additional means of identifying important community themes. This will provide feedback for future workshops and code-building exercises.

V. <u>Activity objective #4</u>: Cultural differences–Barriers to Building self-esteem?
- Ask the group: "Why is it more important for your children to build self-esteem than it was for you?"
- Allow for MANY different answers here. The point is that their children are now living in a country with different values and ideals; therefore, there are more boundaries and signs of differences for their children to negotiate. The goal is not for their children to lose their cultural identity, but to allow it to flourish by elevating the esteem of their children.
- Ask the group: "Who are the most important people involved in building your

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[21] Hope and Timmell, 1, 91.

child's self esteem?"
- "Why are these people so important in the lives of your children?"
- "Do these people value the same things you value?"
- Point out that children generally retain the same or similar values as their parents. However, as self-esteem diminishes, the degree of retention of culture diminishes too.

VI.   Activity objective #5: Eight strategies to improve self-esteem
- Ask the group: "What are some ways we decrease our children's self-esteem?"
- "What are some ways we can help our children build their self-esteem?"
- Explain that by helping to build the self-esteem of out children we are contributing to their success in school, on the job and in maintaining their cultural connection.

VII.   Activity objective #6: Writing positive affirmations
- Ask the group: "Are positive affirmations important?"
- Explain that positive affirmations are statements that emphasize the person not the action. By emphasizing the positive, we do not deny the negative or overlook it.

Workshop #4: Self-Esteem (For Spanish Speaking Groups)

I.   Welcome

II   Introductions and Icebreaker Activity
(Do this as fast or as slow as is necessary. Come up with other categories as you proceed. One facilitator to list "Who We Are As a Group" and provide that information to the group at the end of the exercise)
Facilitator to explain the process to the learners and begin the activity by saying: "Stand up if you . . ."
- Were born in Southern California
- Were born in another country
- Your first language is Spanish
- You speak a 2nd (3rd) Language
- You are a student (in college)
- You have children (1, 2, 3 or more)

II.   Activity #1 (Write questions on newsprint for all to see)
       A.   Have Participants:
- "Reflect on how you came to this country, your 1st experience of school, and a significant event as an adult"
- "Reflect on your experiences as students, parents and/or immigrants"
- "Think about your lives and struggles"

B.   Have each participant create a time-line of their life with the significant events listed above. (Need Legal size pads and pens or pencils)
- Share in small groups of 3 to 4 their respective time lines and come up with a single story as a collective story.

III.   Activity #2: Develop the themes and codify the stories from the above activity (Need News print and markers)
- Have one person share the collective story answering the following:
  - Who are we?
  - What is it that we have in common in our stories?

IV.   Getting to "*Alto Concepto*"
In groups, ask:
- How does society view Latinos and Latinas
- How does society's view of us affect our image of ourselves?
- Have participants create a skit that features their understanding of *Alto Concepto* or Self Image

VI.   How do we put together the above concepts

VII.   Synthesis: closure
- What have we learned?
- Bring together all concepts

Analysis of the Workshops

Beginning February 2001, the above workshops were presented to participants in the Los Angeles County cities of Artesia, Norwalk, Bellflower and Cerritos. Workshops were designed to address with the generative themes and codes uncovered during the interviews described in Chapter 1. A total of eight workshops dealing with issues such as "Civics Participation in the Local Community," "Immigrants in the Workplace," "Financial Planning," "Building Effective Communities," and "Family Literacy," in addition to those above, were written and presented. To prepare for the workshops, facilitators participated in a 2 month series of training sessions designed to familiarize them the basic strategies essential for a problem-posing, critical pedagogy.

Some dissent occurred during the training sessions that centered around the use of a problem-posing pedagogy. All of the facilitators were college educated, middle-class, predominantly Latino/a professionals. Their preferred style of teaching involved lecture. The hesitancy on the part of the facilitators to use a problem-based methodology centered upon issues of trust and experience. In general, once familiarized with the process, facilitators were able to incorporate the methodology into the workshops. A minimum of two facilitators worked with each group.

Participants were predominantly Spanish speaking, first generation from México, and immigrant. Data regarding immigration status was not obtained. Groups ranged in size from 6 participants to 35 participants. Participants in the workshops had no difficulty adapting to the methodology and actively contributed to the process. Storytelling, drawing, writing, singing and dance were accepted and utilized as part of the teaching and learning experience. Creating a common story enabled participants to communicate and connect with community members and with members of their own families. In many instances the renewed sense of community experienced by the participants caused workshops to finish later than planned. In the end, the process of active reflection and synthesis was the component of the process that was most difficult to achieve. This was true especially in the workshops conducted for Spanish speaking participants. In these groups, participants were eager to participate in activities; however, at the point where reflection and synthesis were to occur, they became energized and insisted upon engaging in immediate action in conjunction with the program. One group in particular insisted on the formation of a political action group to march on a local City Hall. This was not the case with predominantly English speaking groups, here

reflection and synthesis were routinely accomplished. The reasons why it was difficult to achieve reflection and synthesis are unknown. Possibilities include (1) the inexperience of the facilitators in bringing closure to a session, (2) the natural inclination on the part of the participants to resist reflection, (3) the natural resistance on the part of some participants to fashioning a synthesis, or (4) the codes and themes revealed by the respondents described in Chapter 1 were accurate and animated and moved the community to action. In any case, participants in this program have decided to become more actively involved in their communities as agents for social change. Furthermore, plans are in place to utilize many of the current participants as future facilitators for the program.

<u>Areas for Future Activities</u>

Success with the CEBEC workshops convinces me that the time to create a school based upon the pedagogy of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica is now. The purpose of the school is two-fold. First and foremost, the future of the *mestizo/a* in America demands a school system that fashions and nurtures the construction of a multiple identity. Second, the preservation and transmission of the ancient *Nahuatl* culture and philosophy is essential. The philosophy and way of life of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica is permeated with truths and realities missing from the mind frame of first world cultures. Furthermore, as has been demonstrated above, it is a philosophy and way of life still practiced in many small ways by the descendants of the *Mexica*.

Fields of study in the school would embody the curricula of the *calmécac, cuicacalli* and *telpochcalli*. For instance, students would study and learn to interpret the philosophy, world-view and religious implications of the *Nahuatl* speaking people through indigenous

eyes. This would be achieved through the process of song, dance and theater, as well as through learning the rhetoric and sayings found in the ancient codices. Accessing the oral traditions is essential. Students would study math and astronomy utilizing indigenous methods.[22] The history of the *Mexica*, including the importance of the ancient laws and the true history of the invasion of the Americas, would be evaluated. Nutrition and medical practices would be emphasized, including the significance of food in the ancient rituals. Finally, students would be encouraged to connect their experiences in the school with indigenous people worldwide.

Conclusion

Successful education of the *mestizo/a* community is a must. Successful education of the local immigrant community in Southern California is an essential starting point for the salvation of a generation of young people who struggle to live in a world they hardly understand. I suggest that a paradigm of liberating education derived from the categories of thought constructed by the modern day descendants of the *Nahuatl* speaking people of ancient Mesoamerica is a necessity. Furthermore, this model must be used to fashion a program to systematically educate all *mestizos/as*. Whether this school is a part of the public school system or offers a parallel education is not important. What is important is that this spirit based, holistic education be specifically constructed for the community of *mestizo/a* immigrants and their children. To do this requires that the educator be grounded in the philosophy, the world-view and the forward struggle of the community. This is not an easy

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[22] See Gregory Cajete Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence, (Santa Fe, N.M.: Clear House Publishers, 2000) and Igniting the Sparkle: An Indigenous Science Education Education Model, (Durango, Col.: Kivaki Press, 1999) for a description of indigenous ways of teaching science and math.

task. However, it is a task that cries for practical, competent people to attend to and partake of the goals and needs of the community. It is my conviction that the historical starting point for the successful education of the community, the teaching of the values and ideals of the culture, and for reflection on this education and teaching is to be found in the *poiesis,* imagination, and experience that comes from the Spirit.[23] This is the same resonating Spirit that the *tlamatinime* of ancient Mesoamerica identified as *ollin,* the same principle which infused life into the communities of the *Nahuatl* speaking people and allowed their cultural religiosity to persist and flourish in the midst of hopelessness and despair. It is the same Spirit which beckons us to take seriously the signs, visions and sense of communion with the transcendent felt so deeply within the modern day descendants of the *Mexica*; the same Spirit which begs the dominant culture to allow indigenous people to restore the loss of memory suffered at the hands of a vicious conqueror.

In order for this vision to transpire the people of the first world must keep close to their hearts the implication of Bartolomé de las Casas' most profound and significant theological insights: Christ speaks to us from among the natives whose history and way of life were destroyed and whose significance is only now beginning to be understood. "Christ calls, summons us, challenges us, from within the mass of these oppressed."[24] When the powerful understand the ramifications of this modern day prophetic revelation, the masses of the newly empowered will rise up and rejoice.

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[23] Gutiérrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells.

[24] Gutiérrez, Power of the Poor, 197. See also Gutiérrez, Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ, (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1993), 18.

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